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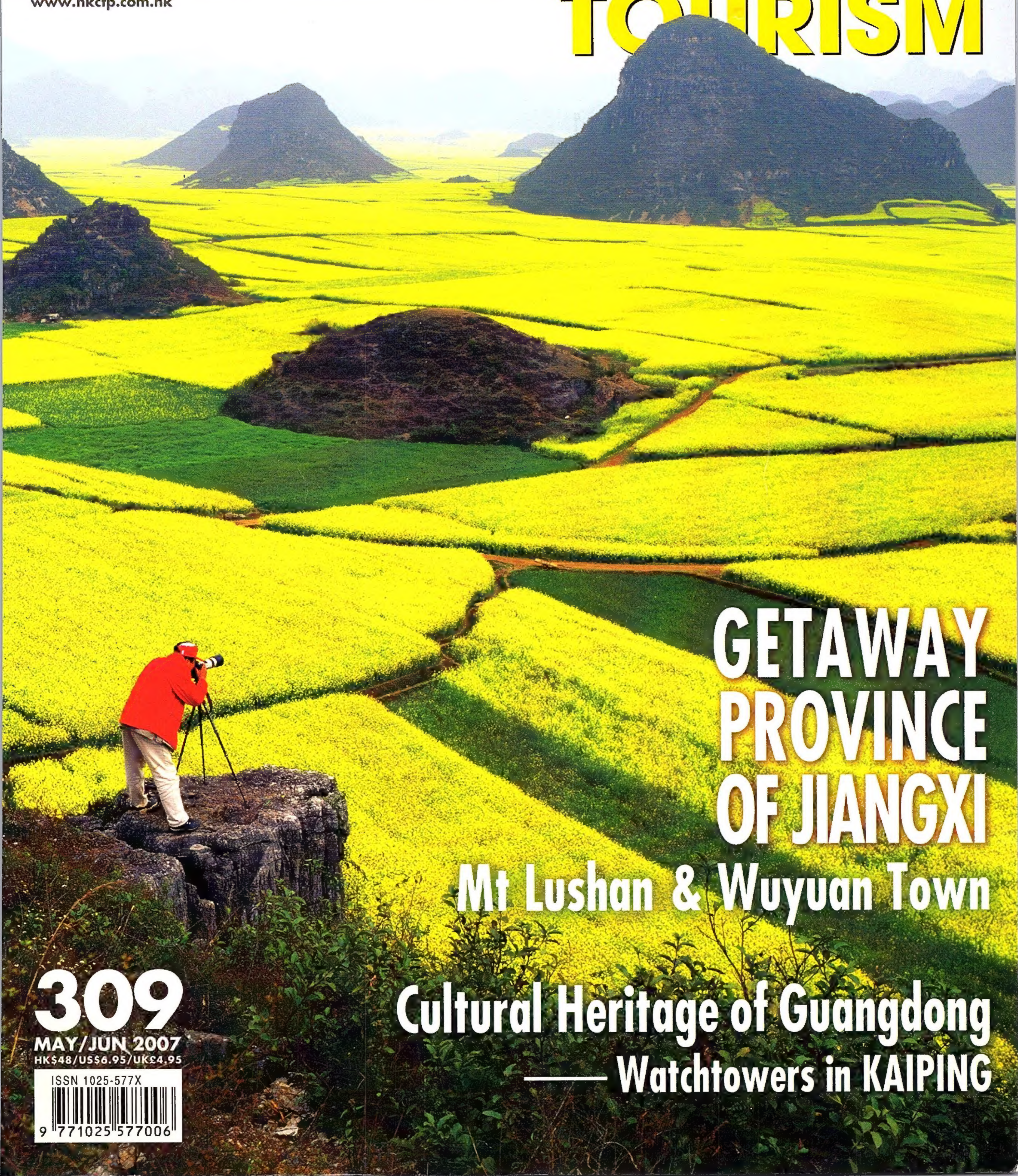

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Cultural Heritage of Guangdong

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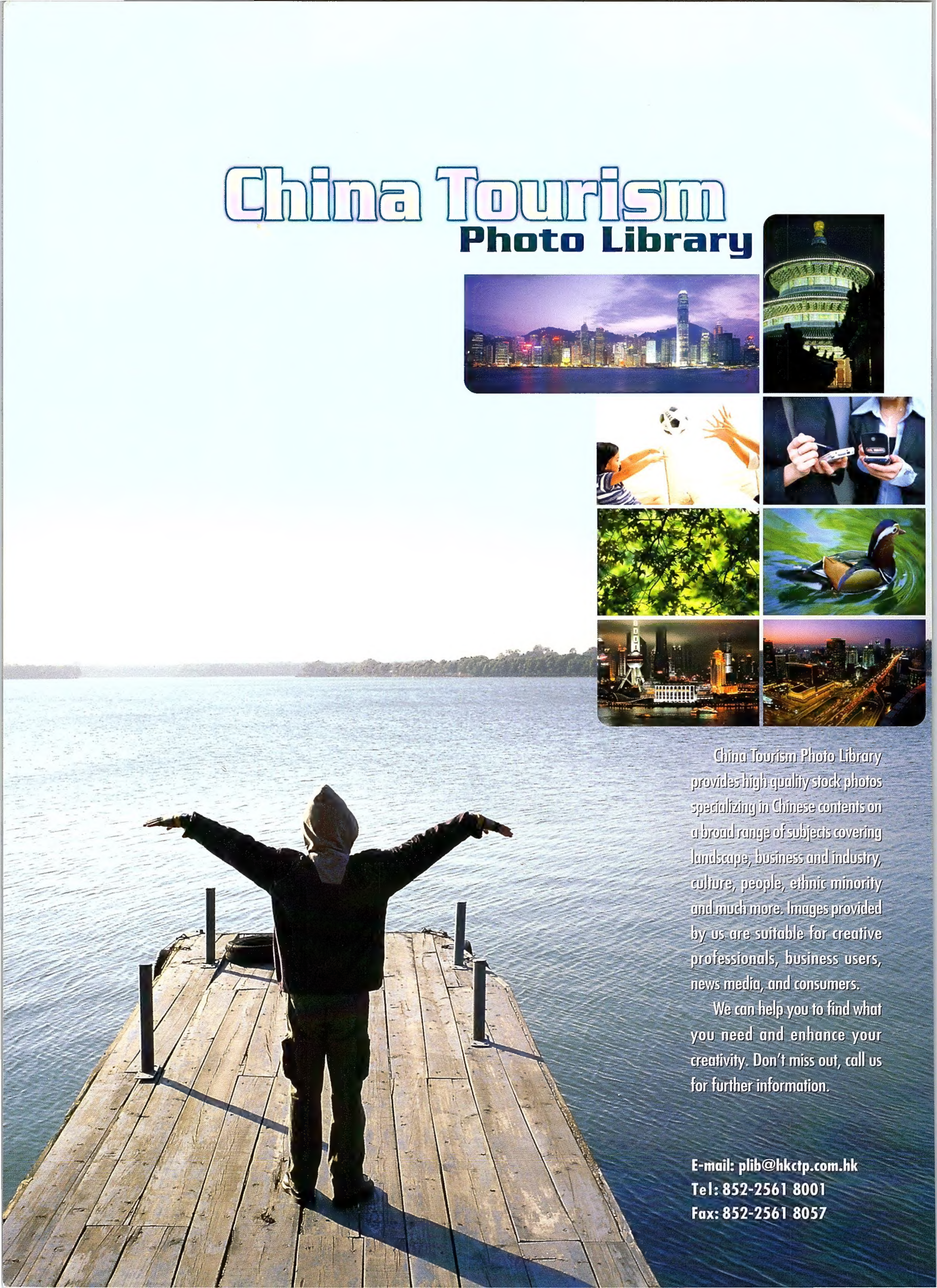

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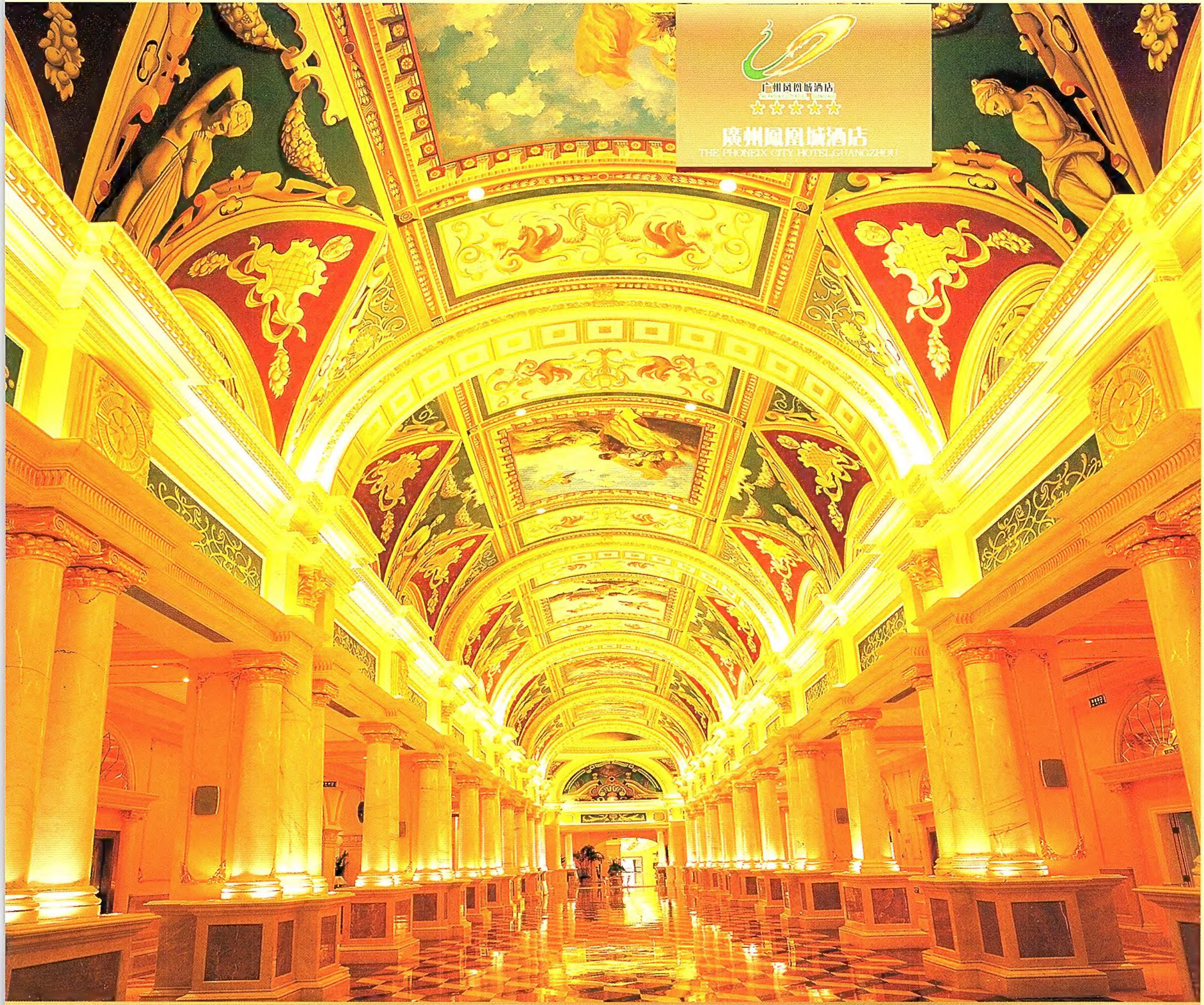

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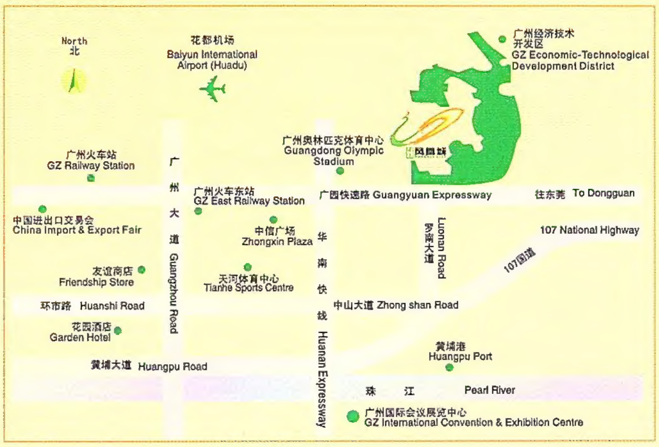
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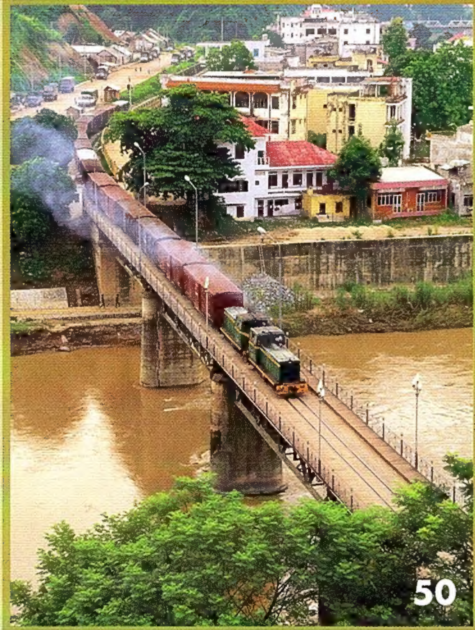
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Relaxing in the North of Jiangxi Province

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Over 1,500 historical figures have been to Mt Lushan and left memories of their visits in about 4,000 poems. The paths they once travelled and the scenery described eventually became the key scenic spots of Lushan. But to the author, Lushan is just the beginning for a relaxed journey in Jiangxi...

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The early expatriate Chinese labourers from Kaiping, a place in South China's Guangdong Province, had experienced unimaginable hardships. But they took their wealth back to their hometown, and over time a complex of watchtowers in a combination of Chinese and Western styles was gradually formed. Today, these unique constructions are nominated to be an UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site.

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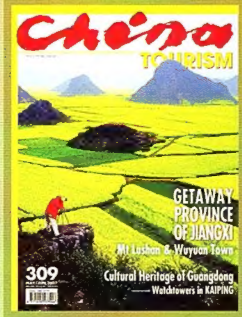
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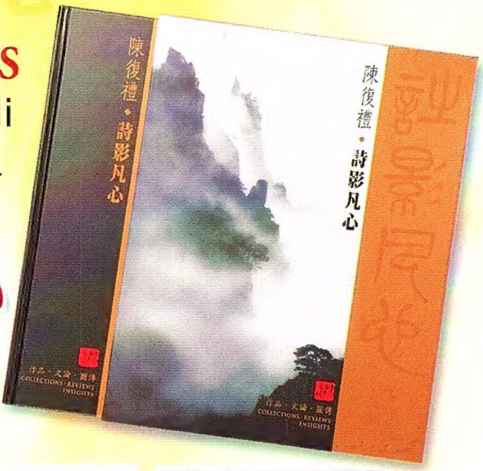

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No. 309 May/Jun 2007

Memories for Tomorrow

Located in the northern Jiangxi Province, Mt Lushan has been a famous travel destination among tourists from home and abroad. However, few may also know that Lushan was once closely related to major events that have changed modern Chinese history. Just not far from the mountain, the down-to-earth Wuyuan and Yaoli areas offer you with completely different feelings from the hustles of city life.

To experience how life is like travelling on the railway and one can only look back to the past while moving forward, we suggest you going for a trip to the abandoned Yunnan-Vietnam Railway. From the ruins of the rail and buildings, or delicacies which can be eaten en route, you may imagine the romance of France in these unique areas.

Back to nearby Guangdong Province, the Kaiping Town is another place of nostalgia. The ancestors of the locals were mostly overseas Chinese who had sacrificed their youth or lives working as peasants in foreign countries. They had contributed their wealth to their hometown — resulting in the gorgeous complex of watchtowers, or *diaolou*.

We should really feel lucky and grateful to have many people created lots of things and events — that have remained as memories for us to look back this lovely country in the future.

An idyllic scenery in a Jiangxi village. (by Huang Yanhong)

Chairman Mao Memorial Hall Closees for Maintenance

Chairman Mao Memorial Hall is to close from 3 March to 20 September for maintenance. Located in Tian'anmen Square in downtown Beijing, Chairman Mao Memorial Hall was built after Mao Zedong died on 9 September, 1976 and completed in May 1977. Since the hall opened on 9 September the same year, it has received 158 million visitors, who came to pay respects to the late Chinese leader.

Mao Zedong (1893—1976), a native of Hunan Province in central China, was the first head of state of the People's Republic of China.

Weekend Packages of Traders Hotel

Traders Hotel, Beijing is offering two enticing packages for travellers wishing to indulge themselves with a weekend getaway. Both the Getaway Weekend and Indulgence Weekend packages start from as little as RMB780+ per night and are available until 31 December 2007.

Perfectly located only 30 minutes from Beijing International Capital Airport and set amidst the hub of the bustling city, the hotel provides an ideal base for delving into the city's culture and history. The famous Tiananmen Square and Forbidden City are only two subway stops from the hotel, whilst the popular shopping markets, where shoppers can test their haggling skills to their heart's content, are even closer.

For sporting or architectural fanatics, Traders Hotel, Beijing is also ideally located for viewing and photographing the Olympic centrepieces, such as the National Aquatic Centre, which is nicknamed the 'Water Cube,' and the main Olympic venue, otherwise known as the 'Bird's Nest.' All are located within a short taxi ride from the hotel.

For more information and reservations, tourists may contact a travel professional or access the website at www.tradershotels.com

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Three More Panda Nature Reserves to Be Built

Southwest China's Sichuan Province will set up three more giant panda nature reserves this year, bringing the total to 40. The new reserves will put half the rare animal's habitat and 60 percent of the wild pandas under protection, said Tang Daixu, director of wildlife protection in the department.

Two of the new reserves, named Huangshuihe Reserve in Lushan County and Paocaowan Reserve in Yingjing County, will begin construction this year, while the other, Bayuelin in Leshan City, is expected to be approved by the central government in 2007.

Sichuan has 1,206 wild pandas, 76 percent of China's total, on 1.77 million hectares of habitat. Eleven of the 37 existing panda reserves in Sichuan are national reserves.

Mini Potala Palace to be Built in Lhasa

With the opening of the Qinghai-Tibet Railway in July 2006, more and more tourists come to visit the palace, but the ancient building with a history exceeding 1,300 years is becoming unbearable. It hence has given rise to the idea of building a miniature Potala Palace to divert the tourist floods to the Tibetan landmark.

With the help of high-tech sound and light, the replica is expected to show a 'vivid and almost real' Potala Palace to visitors. The mini-palace will be housed in a 'treasure exhibition hall' at the foot of Red Hill, where the real Potala Palace is located.

The Chinese government spent 55 million yuan (6.6 million U.S. dollars) repairing the Potala between 1989 and 1994.

Beijing Starts a New Light Railway

Construction on a light rapid transit rail line connecting Beijing's downtown and the city's eastern economic-technological development areas will start this year and is expected to be completed by 2010. The 23.8 km Yizhuang light rail line will begin at the Songjiazhuang Station on the No. 5 subway line and end at the Yizhuang Railway Station in the eastern Yizhuang development area.

There will be 14 stations along the light rail line, eight aboveground and six underground. The Yizhuang New Town, a booming economic and industrial zone, plays an important role in developing of the eastern outskirts of Beijing and is expected to became a high-tech industrial centre.

Shanghai's Hongqiao Airport to Expand

The National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) has approved the expansion plan of the Hongqiao Airport which includes the construction of a second runway, 3,300 metres long, and a 250,000-square-metre terminal. The new terminal will be linked to high-speed railways, inter-city railways and subways, offering passengers maximum convenience.

The project is expected to help build Shanghai into an aviation hub for the Asia and Pacific region and ensure a successful Shanghai Expo in 2010. Shanghai Hongqiao Airport, one of the largest in China, is expected to handle 40 million passengers by 2010, more than four times its current capability.

Dalian to Build Submarine Museum

A 75-metre-long retired submarine is to become the centre-piece exhibit in China's first submarine museum in Northeast China's port city of Dalian, Liaoning Province. According to construction plans, a museum covering 16,000 square metres will be built around the retired Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) submarine.

With an estimated investment of 87 million yuan (US$11.24 million), the museum will allow people to experience life on submarine and provide three-dimension animation programs. Planners hope the museum can become a new tourism highlight of the city.

Grand Canal Restoration Project to Begin

A national organization will be established this year to better protect the world's longest and oldest canal, the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal, making it a top candidate for a world heritage site, as said by the State Administration of Cultural Heritage.

The canal is now navigable between Hangzhou in Zhejiang Province and Jining in Shandong Province. Because of inadequate water and a narrow course, most of the canal's northern section (from Beijing to Jining) is inaccessible to boats. To improve its transportation capacity, Shandong, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang provinces will invest 20 billion yuan ($2.56 billion) on dredging the waterway by 2010. And on completion of the project, the canal will have at least a level-3 navigational ability, allowing 1,000-ton vessels to sail from the Dongping Lake in Shandong Province to Hangzhou, and increasing its transportation capacity by 40 percent.

More Airports in West China

China will invest 52 billion yuan (US$6.67 billion) in airport construction in its western regions from 2006 to 2010, according to the General Administration of Civil Aviation of China (CAAC). Six airports will be relocated and 31 will be expanded during the five years. Twelve airports were built and expanded in 2006 and 17 are under construction.

The Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region will increase the number of its airports from the current 16 to 20 in 2010; North China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region will have 12 airports in 2010 and 18 in 2020.

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Culture

China's Most Read Magazine Go Online

China's most widely read magazine, *Reader*, similar to the American magazine *Reader's Digest*, has launched an official website recently. The website (www.duzhe.com) features 14 columns, including essays on art and philosophy, and many were printed on the home page for netizens to read for free.

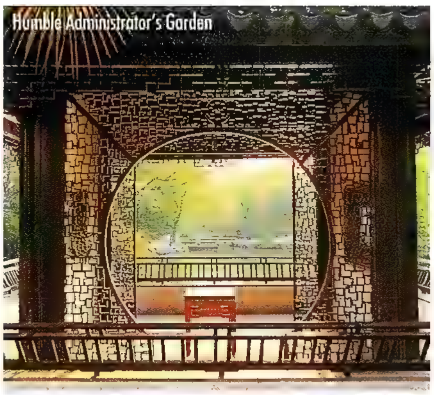
First published in 1981, *Reader* is now the most read magazine in China with an average monthly circulation of over nine million. The magazine was originally named *Duzhe Wenzhai (Reader's Digest)*, which resulted in a copyright dispute with the American magazine of the same name. In 1993, the Chinese digest magazine changed its original name to *Reader*, ending the year-long legal dispute.

Culture

Chongqing Named Hotpot Capital

China's southwestern municipality Chongqing has been awarded a signboard naming it, in gold letters, the 'Hot Pot Capital of China,' at the opening ceremony of the Third Hotpot Festival.

The history of Chongqing hotpot dates back to the Daoguang (Emperor) period of the Qing dynasty, around 180 years ago. At the end of last year, over 50,100 hot pot restaurants were occupying over 62 percent of food service outlets and employing 430,000 workers, over 60 percent of all food service workers, in the city. The cuisine's annual profits reach 7.8 billion yuan, about 40 percent of the total income of the entire food industry. Chongqing hotpot even occupies 70 percent of the market in Chengdu.



Humble Administrator's Garden

Jiangsu

Nine Suzhou Gardens Selected as National Parks

The Ministry of Construction has released the names of the first batch of 20 national parks, including nine Suzhou classical gardens: Zhuozheng Garden, Liu Garden, Wangshi Garden, Huanxiu Villa, Lion Grove, Yipu Garden, Ou Garden, Tuisi Garden and Canglang Pavilion. All the nine gardens are on the list of World Cultural Heritage as well as an indispensable part of the life of Suzhou citizens, not to mention they are also world-renowned tourism resorts. In fact, their unique historical and cultural background serves to contribute to their ranking among national parks.

Beijing

Beijing Airport Ranked World's 9th Passenger Airport

Beijing Capital Airport was ranked ninth biggest in the world in terms of passenger numbers last year according to the Airports Council International (ACI). Hong Kong International Airport was ranked the 14th, up from 16th in 2005, Asia's third biggest after Tokyo Haneda and Beijing.

Beijing Capital Airport became the first Chinese airport ranked among the top 10 with a total of 48.5 million passengers in 2006. Atlanta International Airport in the US was first with 84.84 million passengers.

Guangdong

Panyu Promotes Quality Travel Culture

Starting from 2007, Guangdong city Panyu has released a series of events to promote its themed travel culture as 'Civilized tourism and quality service'. The activities are expected to improve the quality of the tourism industry. There will be related seminars and exhibitions, as well as trainings for tourist guides and leaders.

Henan

Night Tour at Longmen Grottoes

The night tour of Longmen Grottoes, Henan Province was officially launched on 9 April, after such idea has been originated for three years.

Golden lights also light up the Buddha statues in 10 major caves. Courtyard lamps are used to dot the surroundings of Xiangshan Temple. To ensure that no damage is caused on the relics themselves and to make the design as good as possible, the designers have taken into account the geographical structure, climate change characteristics, and flora and fauna around the Longmen Grottoes.

The Longmen Grottoes, together with the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang, Gansu Province, and the Yungang Grottoes in Datong, Shanxi Province, are hailed as China's three greatest collections of Buddhist cave art.

Culture

More Shanghai Things to Apply for Intangible Cultural Heritage

The celebrated Nanxiang steamed bun has applied for national intangible cultural heritage status in late March. If approved, it will become the first snack to win this designation in China. Many Shanghai locals believe that

Nanxiang steamed buns are famous for their nice shape and juicy taste with their fine skin and adequate meat fillings. Its fine reputation could serve as another name for Shanghai.

Besides, old Shanghai songs such as 'Yeh Lai Hsiang', 'Rose Rose I Love You' and 'Shanghai Night' represent Shanghai in the 1930s. It is said that they originated from Baak Lok Moon Pub on the Yuyuan Road in Jingan District in 1933, thus they are called 'Baak Lok Moon Music'. Staff members of Jingan District Archives have applied to the municipal government in April for inclusion of Baak Lok Moon Music on the city's intangible cultural heritage list.

Beijing

China's National Museum to Be Enlarged

China has commenced a nearly two-year-long enlargement project of the National Museum in Beijing. By now, the museum could hardly keep the increasing number of collections and sophisticated facilities. According to the project plan, south, north and west wings of the existing buildings will be repaired and reinforced. New buildings will be constructed eastwards.

The National Museum, standing to the east of the Tian'anmen Square in central Beijing, used to be one of the 10 celebrated constructions after the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949.

Sichuan

Nine-River Vally Restricts Video Shooting

The famous Jiuzhaigou (Nine-River Valley) has announced early in 2007 that all activities related to video shooting should be restricted. This decision may be due to the destruction of environment after a movie-shooting in Zhongdian, Yunnan Province, last year. In last summer, local departments have checked the Nine-River Valley Scenic Area, and have found that the environment has seriously be destroyed. Besides, 33 World Heritage sites in China including Mt Emei and Yellow Mountain have also signed an agreement to range environmental protection as first priority, and strictly limit the video-shooting activities in the scenic areas.

Culture

Traditional Festivals May Be Made Holidays

Recently there has been a news that there may be more new holidays in China, but some current holidays may be shortened. Such arrangements aim to preserve traditions.

The three seven-day 'golden week' national holidays Labour Day (1 May), National Day (1 October) and the Chinese New Year may be shortened so that the total number of holiday days will remain the same. The changes will probably take place from 2008, and the National Development and Reform Commission is drafting the policy.

HK/Macau

Ten More Ferries Link Macau & HK

Ten ferries have been added to the Macau-Hong Kong route as more casino projects are under construction in Macau.

The new ferries aim at bringing more Hong Kong gamblers to Macau. Gambling industry counts in the main income for Macau's economy.

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(by Chan Yat Nin)

Ever wondered to see endless pieces of terraced fields or rapeseed flowers in China? Even the most extravagant of superlatives words become pale in the face of such beauty. The only way to experience it for yourself is to head for the border province of Yunnan. Get your camera and follow us for a journey of visual wonder.

Nature's Masterpiece

A Photography Tour to Yuanyang and Luoping

Photos • Chan Yat Nin, Adam Wong, Stephen Or et al　Article • Stephen Or

Photography Itinerary

Day 1 Hong Kong — Kunming — Luoping

Take the noon flight from Hong Kong to Kunming, arrive at Grand View Tower or Cuihu Park to photograph seagulls in the afternoon, take the night train to Luoping.

Overnight stay: Train

Day 2 Luoping

Arrive in Luoping at 5:08 in the morning, after breakfast, hire a car to photograph the 'Hundred Thousand Mountains' sunrise, then tour sights including corkscrew fields, Jiulong (Nine Dragons) Waterfalls. Arrive at Golden Rooster Ridge (Jinji Ling) to shoot fields of rapeseed flowers at sunset.

Overnight stay: Luoping

Day 3 Luoping — Yuanyang

Watch the sunrise at 6 a.m. at Golden Rooster Ridge. Return, take the bus to Yuanyang, arrive at the Xin Jie (New Street) Town in Yuanyang in the evening. Stroll around the old town. If necessary, make arrangements for charter car.

Overnight stay: Yuanyang

Day 4 Duoyishu — Hani Village — Tiger's Mouth

Get to Shengcun's Duoyishu before 07:30 to photograph the sunrise, tour the village of Hani people. Head to Tiger's Mouth in the afternoon to shoot sunset at the terraced fields.

Overnight stay: Yuanyang

Day 5 Yuanyang — Jianshui

Morning shoot of the tea plantation terraced fields and Jingkou terraced fields, head to the ancient city of Jianshui after lunch for a tour of its sights including the Zhu's Gardens, Confucius Temple, shoot the sunset at Shuanglong (Double-Dragon) Bridge.

Overnight stay: Jianshui

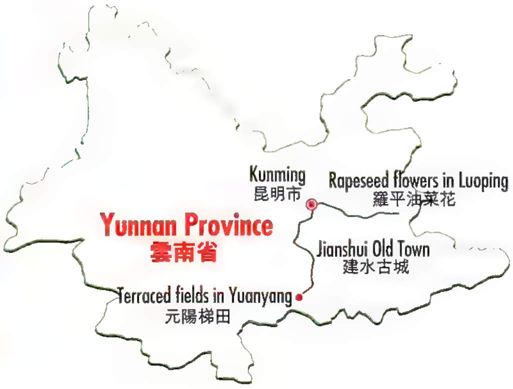
Day 6 Jianshui — Kunming

Photograph Jianshui's ancient wells in the morning, then head to nearby Tuanshan Village to shoot the traditional square courtyard residences with their five atriums, take the afternoon bus to Kunming.

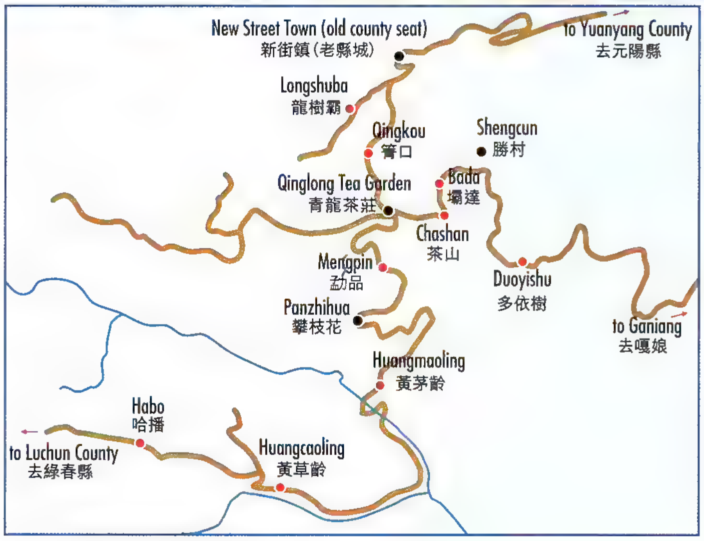
Overnight stay: Kunming

Day 7 Kunming — Hong Kong

Take the direct flight back to Hong Kong after breakfast.



(by Stephen Or)

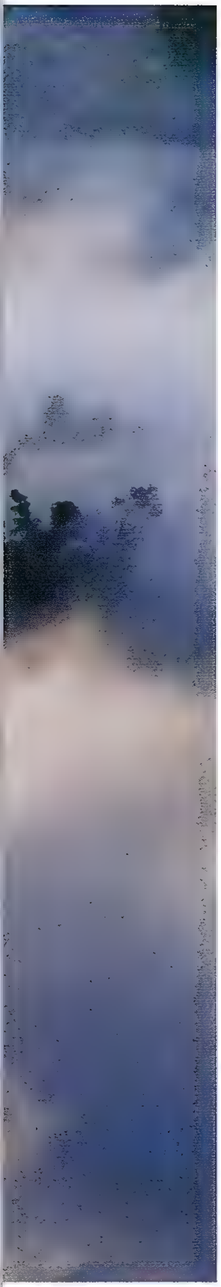

New Street Town (old county seat)
新街鎮(老縣城)
to Yuanyang County
去元陽縣
Longshuba
龍樹壩
Qingkou
箐口
Shengcun
勝村
Qinglong Tea Garden
青龍茶莊
Bada
壩達
Chashan
茶山
Mengpin
勐品
Duoyishu
多依樹
Panzhihua
攀枝花
to Ganiang
去嘎娘
Huangmaoling
黃茅嶺
Habo
哈播
to Luchun County
去綠春縣
Huangcaoling
黃草嶺

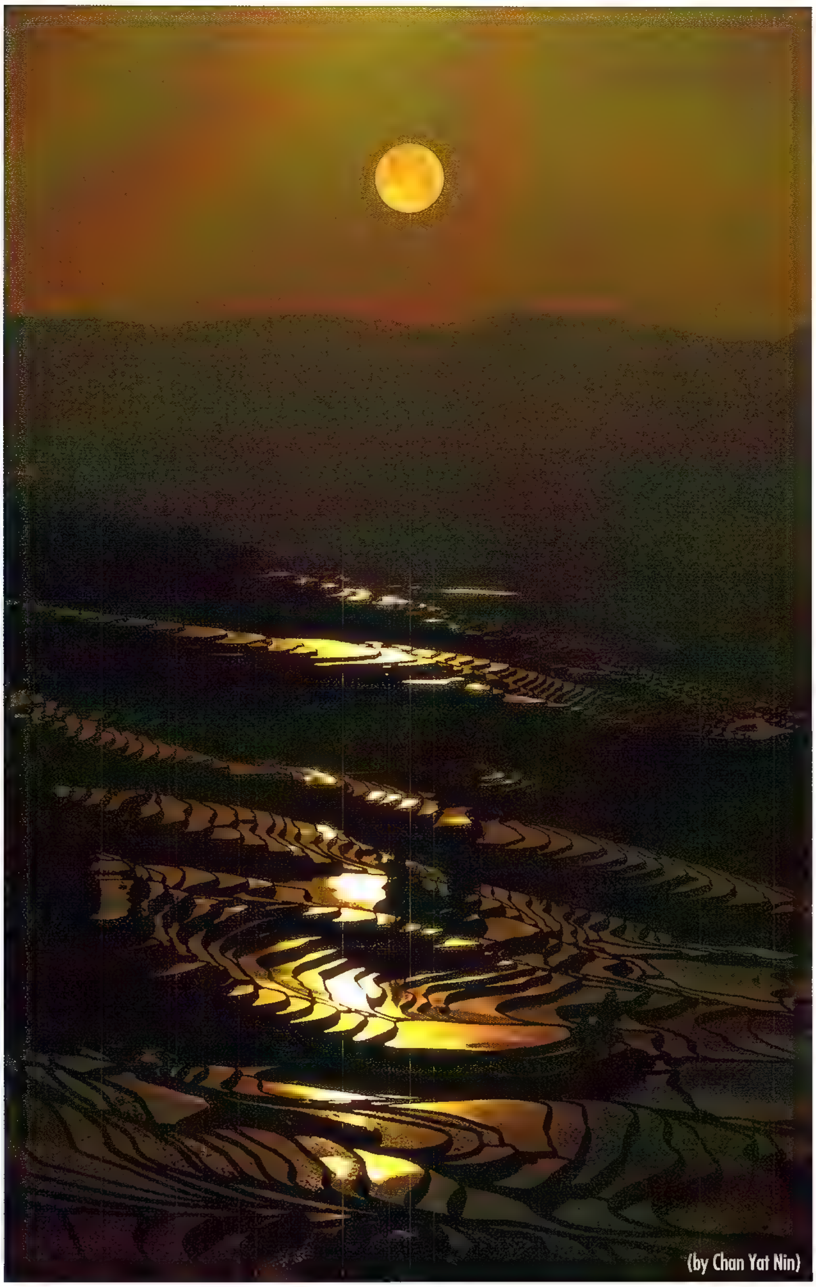
Yuanyang Terraced Fields

Yuanyang's Hani terraced fields are located in the south of Ailao Mountain, it's divided into three major areas—Bada, Laohu Zui (Tiger's Month) and Duoyishu. Each year during Chinese New Year, the terraced fields store water until they resemble giant mirrors—reflecting the beautiful sky, with cottony clouds as a backdrop.

Best shooting times:

Yuanyang is best from the year-end to early April of the following year, during this time the terraced fields are full of water. Worth remembering is the 12th day of the 12th month in the lunar calendar when Hani villagers pay tribute to the dragon with a special grand banquet.





(by Chan Yat Nin)

Morning of Duoyishu

Duoyishu is around 25 km to the east of Xin Jie, around 4 ~ 5 kilometres from Sheng village, the altitude is 1,900 metres. Because it's so high up, each year there are about 200 days of foggy weather. Just the fog itself adds tremendous visual interest, drifting up and down, changing every minute, at times engulfing the terraced fields, villages and forests, at others disappearing.

Getting there:

Take a bus in the Ganiang direction, after passing Quanfuzhuang, Bada, Shengcun, then get off at Duoyi Shu. But buses don't run until after 07:00, so if you want to catch the sunrise it's best to hire a car.

Shooting tips:

There is a hilly area next to the road at the Duoyishu entrance that's large enough for a thousand people and therefore an ideal location for photo buffs to set up their gear for the sunrise. When it rains, you're in luck because it renders Duoyishu into a magical place, as soon as the rain ceases, the mist appears, shifting and encircling, partly obscuring the village and full of ethereal beauty like Chinese brush and ink paintings.

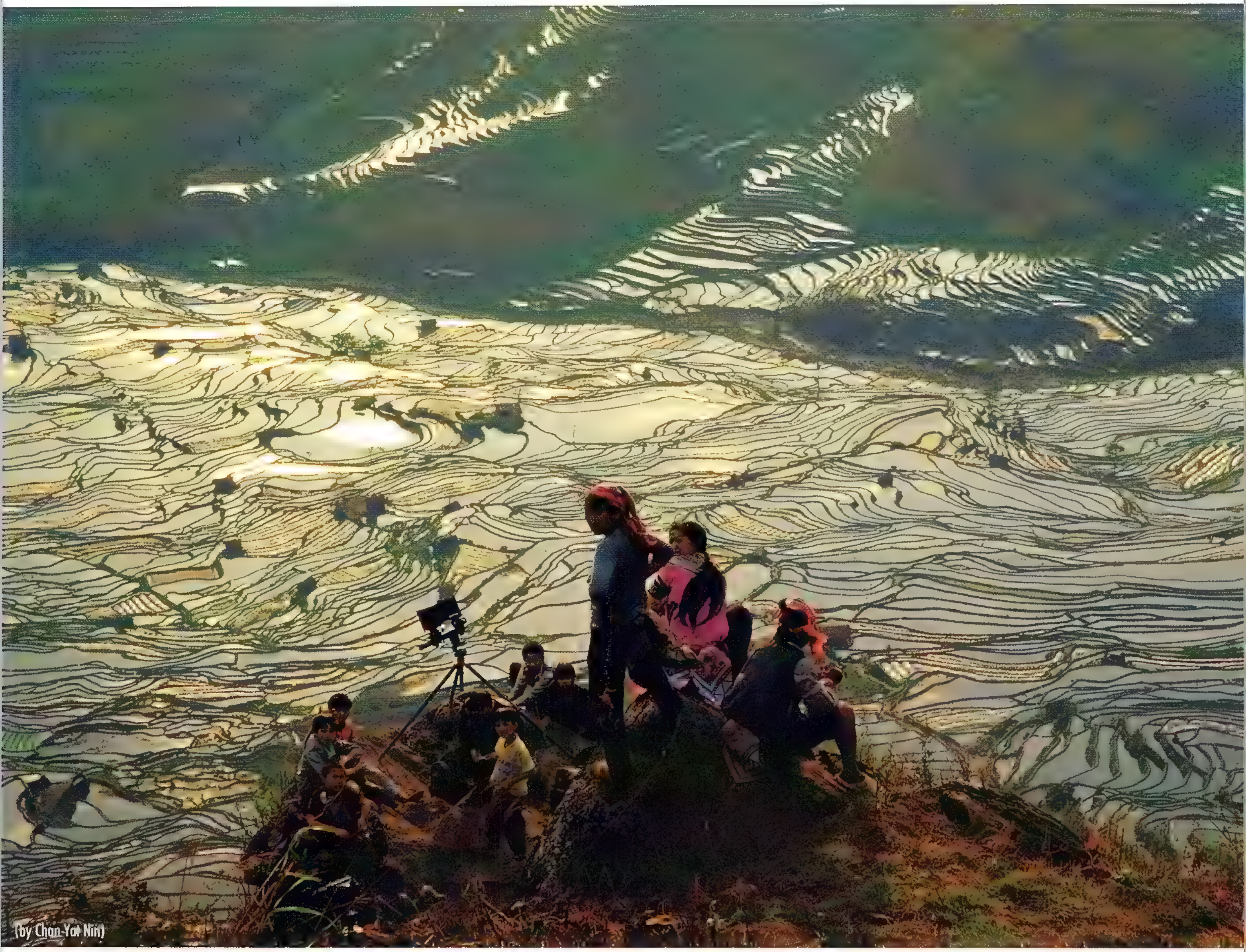
Best shooting time: Sunset, morning

Photo Parameters

In winter and spring, Yunnan's Yuanyang and Luoping enjoy temperatures in average of around 15°C, easy on any type of camera. But this time of the year is often rainy and foggy, so be prepared to protect your camera from moisture. You can buy a waterproof shield, or use a cheaper alternative—the plastic shower caps provided by hotels.

When it comes to choosing lenses, the wider the angle, the better, a super wide angle lens can take in the full splendor of the terraced fields; mid-focal length lenses—24mm ~ 70mm (or 28mm ~ 70mm) are handy for the very exotic street fair and long dragon banquets; while the 80 ~ 200mm zoom lens gives you more freedom with composition. In addition, take a telephoto lens with a focal length greater than 300mm to shoot parts of the terraced fields, because Yuanyang terraced fields are mostly photographed from the road, telephoto lenses are very helpful. Large format cameras can be ideal in portraying the grandeur of Luoping and Yuanyang, but since shooting at Luoping and Yuanyang involves climbing hills (for a better vantage point) and getting into the fields (for close ups), heavy gear can be a drag on your shooting plans.

The best film to take are ISO100 (outdoor landscapes) and ISO200 (portraits and cultural scenes), add some black-and-white film for photographing Jianshui ancient wells and Hani folk customs, while the mist-enshrouded Yuanyang terraced fields in black and white also have an exceptional loveliness. The Kodak 100vs gives you pretty golden colours for sunset, while the Fuji RVP F100 is great for capturing the pinkish hues of sunrise. Some Fuji RDP will come in handy when you're photographing people at the street fair, the film is very accurate in representation of skin tones. Some people also like Kodak's 100vs to best show the vivid colours of folk dress.



(by Chan Yat Nin)

Mengpin Terraced Fields

Mengpin terraced fields are the biggest and grandest of Yuanyang terraced fields. It is made up of three areas: Laohu Zui terraced fields, Amengkong terraced fields, Baoshan Stockade terraced fields. There are over 3,000 *mu* of terraced fields with different shapes, at the top you'll find an area resembling a sprinting stallion — a vivid image with mane and hoofs flying. The fields shimmer and sway in the afternoon sun, resembling a massive silk brocade of a thousand colours.

Getting there:

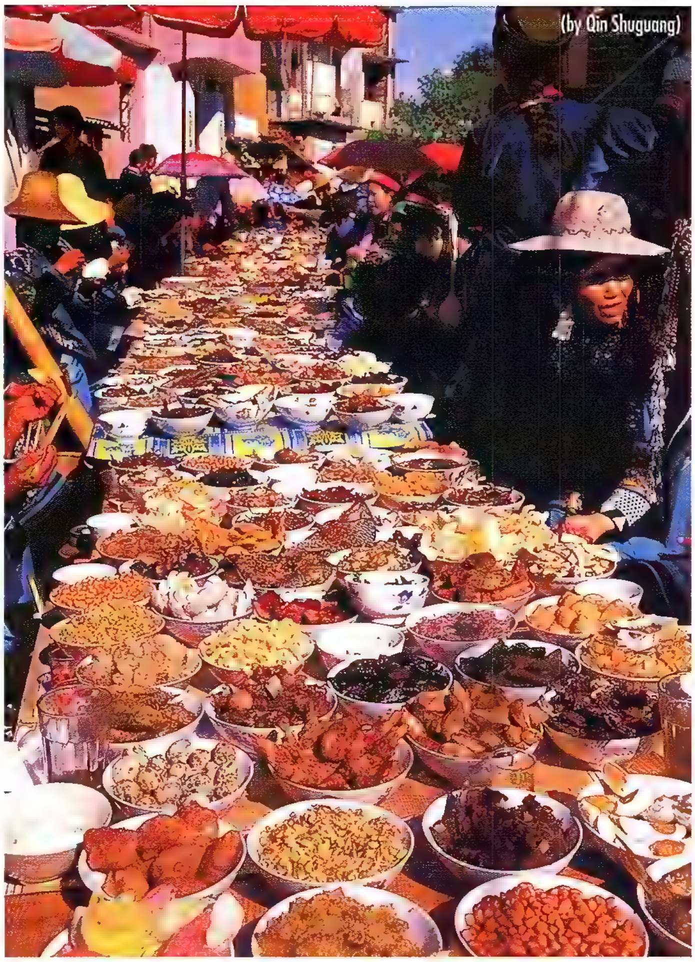
About 20 km to the south of Xin Jie (New Street), next to the No. 214 public road. You can take the Xin Jie to Lvchun bus, get off at Guanjing Tai (view-watching terrace), or hire a car (single journey around 30 yuan, 50 yuan for a return trip). Because there aren't many buses back to Xin Jie after the sunset shoot, hiring a car is the best option.

Shooting tips:

Next to the 214 highway going to Luchun is a scenic lookout point, here you can get a perfect shot of the breathtaking terraced fields. If it's different angles you're after, walk down from the scenic lookout point to the fields. By this time you're bound to have encountered some Hani guides, they would gladly take you on a scouting trip for that unique position for about 10 ~ 20 yuan per trip. These guides are skilled at finding the best places for photographers—thanks to years of experience.

Best shooting time:

After four in the afternoon to before sunset. In addition, the harvest season in early to mid August is wonderful for memorable shots.



(by Qin Shuguang)

Habo's Long Dragon Banquet

Habo is one of the largest Hani villages, here Hani culture is celebrated to the max. Each year, the 12th day of the 12th month in the lunar calendar is when the Habo Village worships the dragon, also called 'ang ma tu'. Come that day, each household prepares a table full of gourmet dishes, with 300 tables in the whole village, table after table are joined together on the street, to form the world's longest dragon banquet. Boisterous singing and dancing accompany the enthusiastic feasting.

Getting there:

Habo is about 85 km from the town of Xin Jie, get off at the bus to Luchun from Nansha Town of the county, buses operate from 08:00 to 14:30; also there are many mini-vans from Xin Jie going to Habo, 16 yuan/ person, they depart as soon as the mini-van's full. Hiring a car will cost around 200 yuan for a return trip.

Shooting tips:

Habo has more to offer than just the long dragon banquet—its terraced fields are dyed a stunning red in the mornings, also take note of the lone tree at the top of the terraced fields about two kilometres in the Habo to Yuanyang direction, it is a striking sight in the first rays of sunrise.

Best shooting time:

Around sunrise each day. The 12th day of the 12th lunar month is the best time for taking pictures of the long dragon banquet.

Jianshui Ancient City

The ancient city of Jianshui is around 214 km from Kunming — it is a state recognized historical and cultural city. The city has kept over 50 of its ancient architectures after 12 centuries of construction, it's earned the moniker 'ancient architecture museum' and 'museum of private residences'. The best-known ones are: China's biggest Confucian temple from the Yuan dynasty, Chaoyang Tower from the Ming dynasty (little Tian'an men Square) and Zhu family gardens.

Getting there:

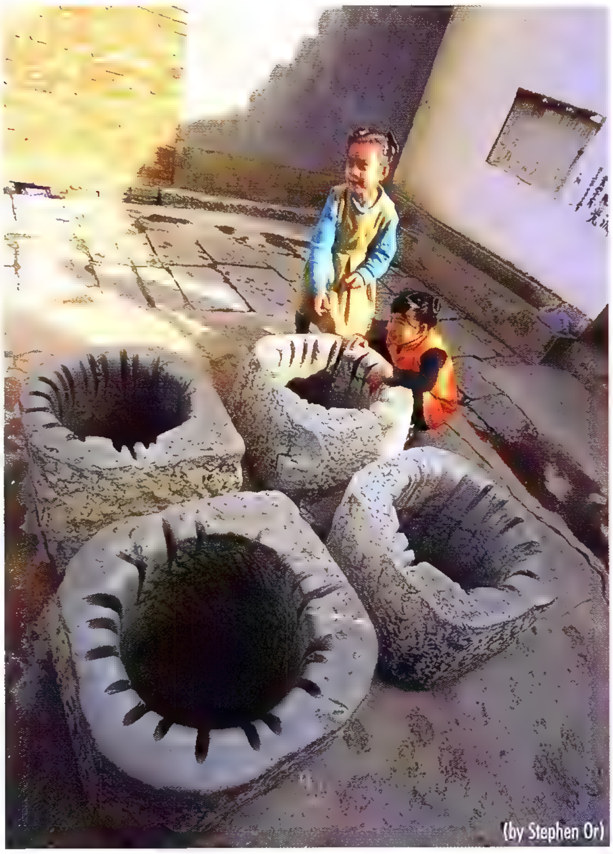
Take one of the many buses to Jianshui from Kunming's Nanyao bus terminal, the earliest bus leaves at 07:30, tickets cost 50 yuan (prices are higher during Chinese New Year), passing through Kunyu, Yuyuan expressways, whole journey lasts four hours.

Shooting tips:

What gets photographers excited in Jianshui are the many wells in the city — dating back to hundreds of years ago, the wells' deep colours and heavy textures are perfectly rendered by black and white film. Range finder cameras are best because you can take excellent shots without disturbing the subject.

Best shooting times:

Morning and evening are best for taking pictures of Jianshui's ancient wells, this is when they're in use for washing in the morning, preparing dinner in the evening, your pictures will capture a slice of real life in Jianshui.



(by Stephen Or)

(by Adam Wong)

Sea of Flowers — Luoping's Golden Rooster Ridge

Luoping lies at the juncture between three provinces— Yunnan, Guizhou, Guangxi, hence it's said that a rooster's crows here would reach all three provinces. Each year in February and March, over 200,000 *mu* of rapeseed flowers bloom in profusion, forming a veritable sea of golden flowers. Luoping's best sights for rapeseed flowers are concentrated around the county, they include Golden Rooster Ridge, Niujie cockscrew fields, Duoyi River and Jiulong Waterfall. The most impressive views are at Golden Rooster Ridge, which offers a bird's eye view of the fields of gold, with a majestic backdrop of the mountains.

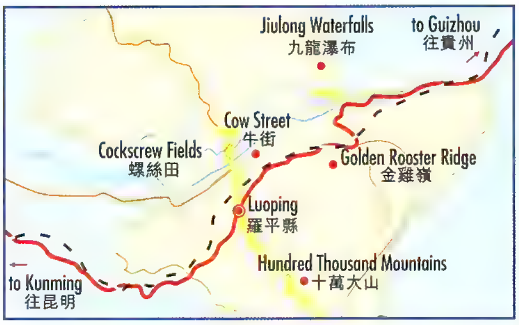
Getting there:

About 12 km to the northeast of Luoping along the 324 public road, accessible by mini-bus, pedi-cab or by hiring a car.

Pedi-cab 10 yuan (15 minutes) / minibuses cost 2 yuan (10 minutes) / car hire 160 yuan/ day (including Cockscrew Fields and Jiulong Waterfall)

Shooting tips:

Jinji Ling's Lingyi Temple scenic lookout may be the best place for viewing Luoping's rapeseed flowers, but the ideal position is at the top of the mountain — for that panorama shot. There is another free sight, a few hundred metres in the Jinji (Golden Rooster) mountain to county direction you will see a sign that says 'rapeseed flowers scenic lookout', walk straight ahead, there's a hill on the left, the top of which also offers sweeping vistas.



Best shooting times:

Usually from just after Chinese New Year to early March, the flowers are in full bloom for about 10 days. Also the second day of the second month, third day of the third month in the lunar calendar are important festivals for the local ethnic groups, a terrific time to photograph folk customs. The best time of the day is between 7 ~ 9 in the morning, when a light veil of mist floats over the rapeseed flower fields, beguiling the beholder with changing colours wherever the sunlight hits. Another good time is 4 p.m. until dusk, when the setting sun amplifies the gold of the rapeseed flowers.

Jiulong Waterfalls

At the Jiulong (Nine Dragons) River about 22 km to the northeast of Luoping County, there are 10 levels of waterfalls of varying sizes and shapes along the four-kilometre long river. The biggest stands at 56 metres tall, 110 metres wide, wider than Guizhou's Huangguoshu Waterfalls, it's referred to as the top waterfall of Jiulong.

Getting there:

There are direct buses from the bus terminal—8 yuan/ person, or take the bus to Banqiao (6 yuan/ person), then change to a mini-van taxi or mini-bus, 2 yuan/ person to the scenic area entrance. Hiring a car for a return trip costs 50 yuan.

Shooting tips:

The waterfall face the southeast, which means the light is better in the morning, in the afternoon the scenery is backlit. To get a shot of the entire group of waterfalls, you have to take a cable car up to Tonggu Mountain to the right of the waterfall, or save some money by hiking to the top of the Shenlong Waterfall, then to Tonggu Mountain.

Best shooting times:

Summer may be the wettest season, but the water is yellow and there is so much mist from the gushing stream that it obscures the waterfall, that's why the ideal time is when spring meets summer, the water is green and the water level is just right for photography.

Translated by Cheng Lei

(by Adam Wong)

Travel Tips

What To Wear

Yuanyang's sights are in mountainous regions, with altitude of 1,500 ~ 3,000 metres, the higher areas have an annual average temperature of 12°C, the lower altitude areas have an annual average temperature of 25°C, the differential is as much as 13°C. During Chinese New Year, Yuanyang may fool visitors with hot days - but morning and evenings, or rainy days are quite a few degrees lower, so warm clothing is essential. In spring and winter Luoping is more often than not - rainy and foggy, the temperature is a few degrees warmer than Yuanyang.

What To Eat

The cuisine is similar to other areas in Yunnan—expect lots of rice noodles and rice vermicelli. Eateries abound on Xin Jie, with similar tastes and prices. Xiaoyu Restaurant at the entrance to Laojie at the square, the owner used to live in Guangdong, so you can ask the chef to make the taste lighter. Meals in Luoping are cheaper—meat dishes cost around 15 yuan, vegetable dishes are under 10, there are some decent little restaurants near the Public Security Bureau on Hongxing Beijie. Specialty dishes from all over China can be sampled at the area around Longmen Jie of the Laocheng. In Jianshui, try some delicacies unique to the region, barbeque tofu and sprouts, the former is a delicious snack of diced tofu grilled on iron mesh netting and eaten with chilli.

Where to Stay

Kunming

Chahua Hotel: 7-bed dorms, 30 yuan/ person, shared bathrooms; standard rooms 90 yuan.
Tel: (871) 316 3000

Yuanyang

Xiaoyu Hotel: Near the square, beds 20 yuan/ day, equipped with solar water heater for showers,
Tel: (873) 562 2124

Luoping

Kaishulou Hotel: Add: Opposite the Agricultural Bank, the interior is about a 2 star rating, 50 yuan/ standard room

Where to Go

Kunming—Luoping

Train: Hard seat tickets 30 yuan, train no. K394 (19:03), K189 (20:51), four-hour trip
Bus: 35 yuan the latest one leaves at 9 p.m., journey takes more than 5 hours

Luoping—Yuanyang

1. Take the bus from Luoping to Kaiyuan—passing Shizong, Luxi, Mile, change to the bus to the town of Yuanyang Xin Jie via Gujiu. Take the bus which departs at 06:30 from Luoping to Kaiyuan, then change to the 13:50 bus from Kaiyuan to Xin Jie Town in Yuanyang. Arrive at the town at around 16:00.
2. Take the 02:08 train from Luoping (two other services depart at 20:55, 20:59) to Kunming, arriving at 06:12, at Nanyao bus terminal, transfer to the 07:30 bus to Jianshui, then change to the bus to Xin Jie Town, by noon you may arrive.

Kunming—Yuanyang

Yuanyang County is around 326 km from Kunming, the bus trip takes 9 hours, departing from any of Kunming's bus terminals. There are two services from Nanyao bus station to Yuanyang, with only one bus departsin the morning, which is an express service, the one at night is a sleeper bus. Tickets cost 80 ~ 100 yuan, but the price is negotiable.

Car-hire

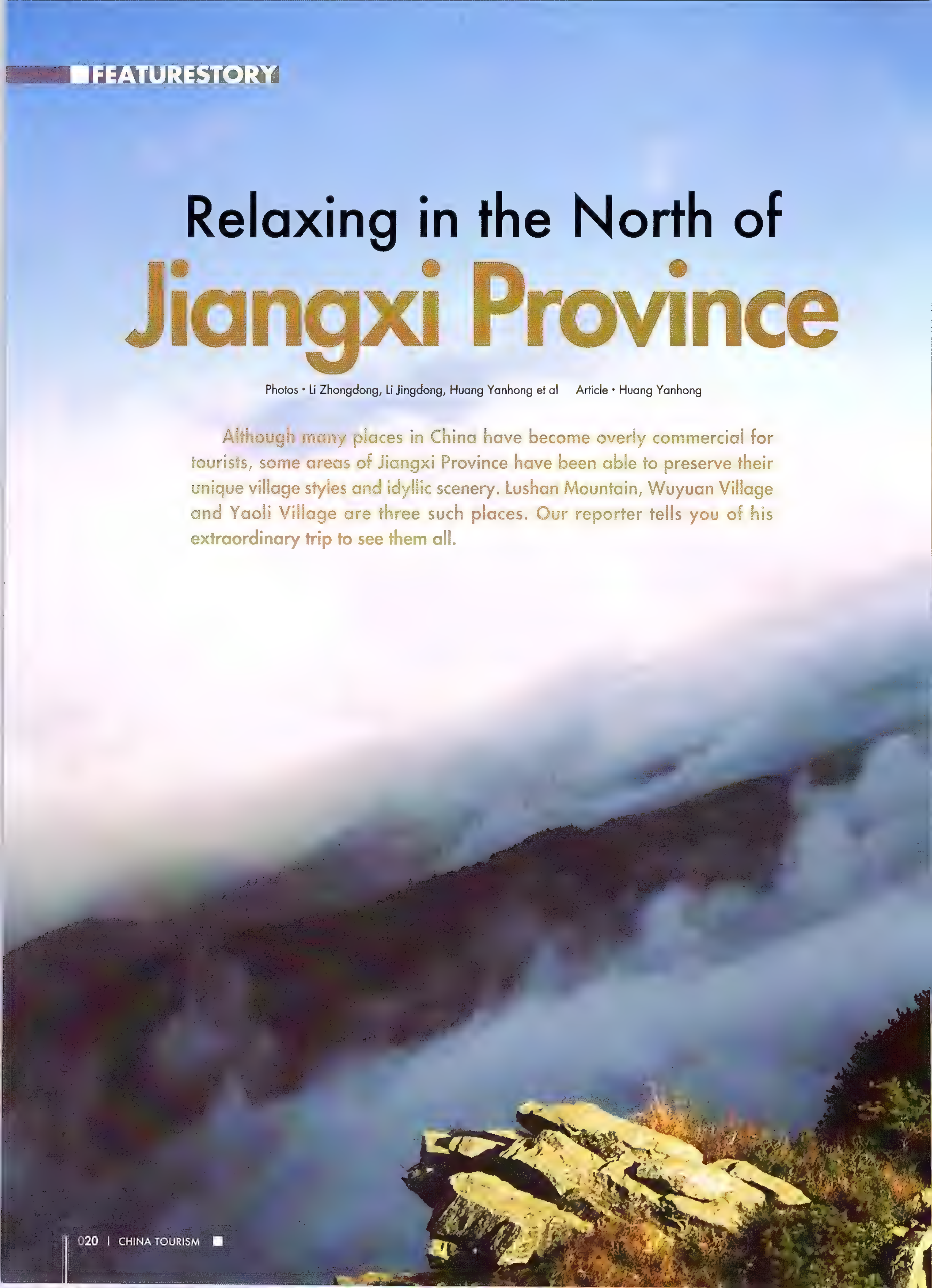
It costs around 120 ~ 180 yuan/ day to hire a car in Yuanyang, there are many cars near the square, with some drivers who make a living out of taking photographers to the terraced fields, they're a good source of knowledge about the best times and vantage points.

Luoping car hire costs 160 yuan/ day (including Golden Rooster Ridge, Cockscrew Fields and Jiulong waterfall)

Relaxing in the North of Jiangxi Province

Photos • Li Zhongdong, Li Jingdong, Huang Yanhong et al Article • Huang Yanhong

Although many places in China have become overly commercial for tourists, some areas of Jiangxi Province have been able to preserve their unique village styles and idyllic scenery. Lushan Mountain, Wuyuan Village and Yaoli Village are three such places. Our reporter tells you of his extraordinary trip to see them all.



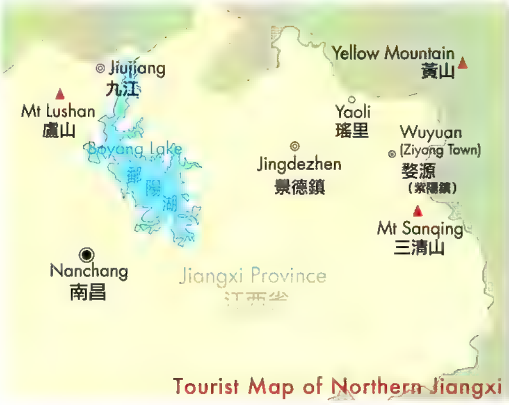
Such a huge sea of cloud is a rare scene at Mt Lushan. (by Xu Jinlong)

1. The distant red River-view Pavilion is dimly visible amid the floating clouds.

2. The misty Ruqin Lake looks like a fairyland.

A Close Encounter with Mt Lushan

Photos • Li Zhongdong


Jiujiang
九江
Mt Lushan
廬山
Boyang Lake
鄱陽湖
Yellow Mountain
黃山
Yaoli
瑤里
Wuyuan
(Ziyang Town)
婺源
(紫陽鎮)
Jingdezhen
景德鎮
Mt Sanqing
三清山
Nanchang
南昌
Jiangxi Province
江西省
Tourist Map of Northern Jiangxi

Mt Lushan, rising abruptly from the plain, is famous for its imposing and graceful peaks, with unique scenery in every direction. But, one still needs a bit of luck and good timing to see its grand views.

I visited Lushan 30 years ago in winter, roaming the mountain accompanied only by the freezing cold wind. At that time there were neither tour groups nor tourist maps. The villas were not open to the public —

most were sanatoriums for big government organizations or army departments while others seemed to be occupied by some mysterious people who had guards patrolling the grounds. Its dignity, isolation and mystery left a deep impression in my mind.

Lushan has certainly changed since then — the whole mountain is now ablaze with lights. The streets of Guling Town teem with crowds of people bustling about every evening.

Beauty To Be Treasured

Fortunately, the beautiful scenery of Mt Lushan has not been lost. Measures to protect the environment have been in place for a long time, keeping it neat and tidy. The water drainage system functions under strict controls and all garbage is regularly collected and removed. In addition, the residential area of Lushan uses electricity rather than coal or oil, cutting down on any smoke damage. Furthermore, all buildings violating regulations or not conforming to the style of the locale, including a 24-metre high viewing terrace in Guling Town, have been removed.

Symbolic of its environmental concern, Lushan has been evaluated and defined as 'an excellent ecological tourism scenic spot' by the United Nations on World Environment Day in 2005. Mt Lushan was the only tourist attraction in China that has been given such a title.

From the Hanpo Pass, it's sometimes possible to see Poyang Lake stretching out from the foot of the mountain. Low lying clouds abound here, making the lake often invisible and tourists hope for a break. Despite this, I was able to appreciate the snowy scenery around Lulin Lake. Ice had crystallized on the tree branches, glittering and translucent like skilfully carved hanging jade. Revelling in this fabulous scene, I felt it was a pity that Lushan is not inscribed on the UNESCO Natural Heritage list as well as on its Cultural Heritage list.

Famous Connections

Once a mountain has connections with famous people it will never be lonely. There will always be other people, like myself, who are interested in studying its culture and history.

Da Yu, founder of the Xia Dynasty, is said to have once climbed up Hanyang Peak, the tallest of Mt Lushan peaks, 4,000 years ago to observe the flood situation of the Yangtze River. Yuwang (Yu Emperor) Cliff here is the place where Da Yu once sat.

There is a legend that seven brothers of the Kuang Family came to Mt Lushan in the Zhou Dynasty to cultivate themselves into becoming Taoist immortals. Thus Lushan is also known as Kuang Lu.

Sima Qian, a historian of the Han Dynasty, arranged a special trip to Lushan to offer remembrance to Da Yu. Not long afterwards, his trip was recorded in the Historical Records, making it the first instance of Mt Lushan being mentioned in writing.

Li Bai, a famous poet of the Tang Dynasty, went to Mt Lushan three times and wrote 14 poems describing

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it. He was followed by many other famous poets, such as Meng Haoran, Du Fu, Bai Juyi, and Su Dongpo. One of Su Dongpo's poems enjoyed great popularity:

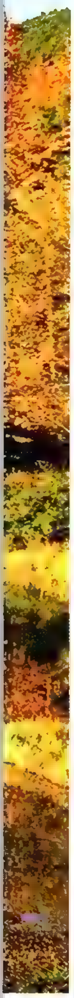
From any direction you can see ridges and peaks
But they vary in height from far and near
I see not the true face of Lushan
For I am right in this very mountain

To date, over 1,500 historical figures have been to Lushan and left memories of their visits in about 4,000 poems. The paths they once travelled and the scenery described eventually became the key scenic spots of Lushan.

San Die Quan, or Three Step Waterfall, is Mt Lushan's greatest wonder. The best way to experience its spectacular cascade is to walk down the thousand steps from Wulao Peak to the very bottom. The water drops 155 metres over three stages of cliffs, splashing with greater force the farther down it falls. At the last stage, excited tourists were busy posing for the cameras.

To escape the political turmoil in the Tang Dynasty, Li Bai retreated to Mt Lushan with his wife, surnamed Zong. He was so content in this beautiful environment that he built a house called 'Study of Tai Bai' (Li's other name) near Wulao Peak where he enjoyed his stay in seclusion.

1. The Ruqin Lake in its golden autumn glow.
2. Snow covers the Tianqiao Bridge.
3. Winter's floating clouds at Mt Lushan give it a distinctive charm and beauty.
4. The scenery of the Magnificent Valley.



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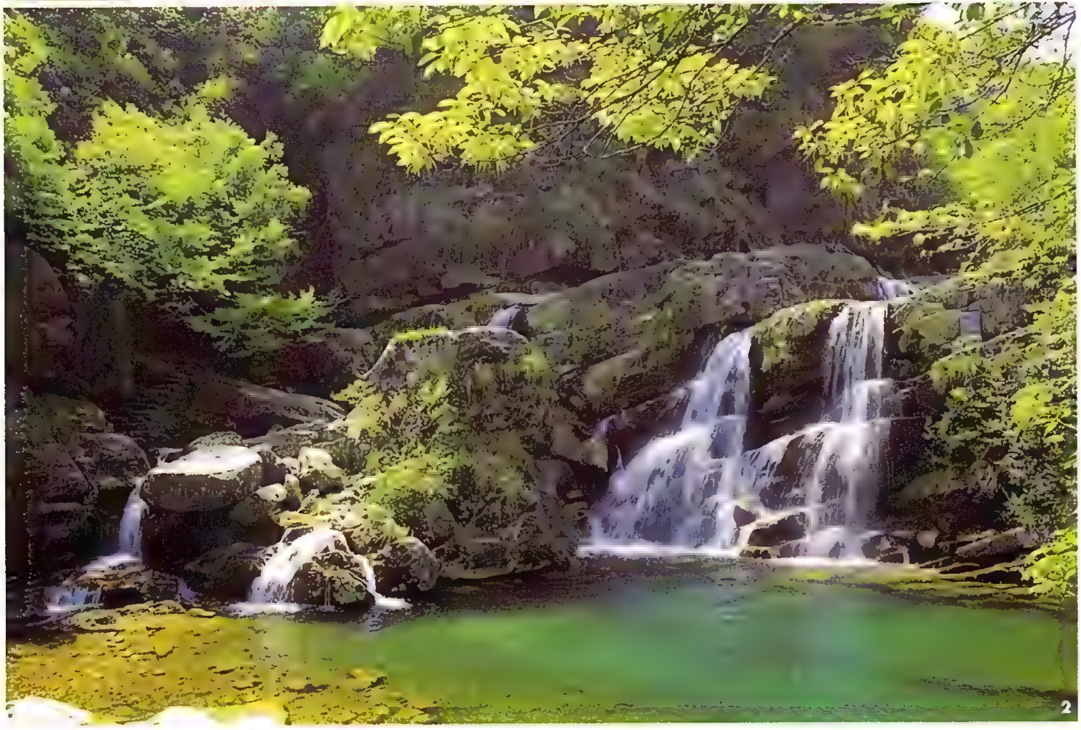

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The Immortal's Cave became famous because of a poem that has four lines, each containing seven characters. Mao Zedong once saw a picture of the Immortal's Cave taken by comrade Jiang Qing, his wife, and felt inspired to write this poem:

Nature has excelled herself at the Immortal's Cave
On perilous peaks dwells beauty in infinite variety

In this way the Immortal's Cave became immortal in the memories of almost everyone in China. Despite Jiang Qing's demise, it is still a tourist hotspot.

It is now a place where the tourists burn incense and have their fortunes told — not things that would have been done in Mao's time.

The Clouds and Mist of Mt Lushan

Mt Lushan is well-known for its clouds and mist - the soul of its scenery. As the clouds in Mt Lushan change all the time, visitors never get tired of their time on the mountain.

Everywhere you go on the mountain — the Immortal's Cave, Hanpo Pass, Lulin Lake or other scenic spots — there is an ever-changing sea of clouds floating among the peaks. At times, the nearby scenes disappear into the mist only to reappear seconds later and stun visitors with their beauty.

Once I watched the clouds of Lushan for half a day. While sitting there, I saw the clouds swirl and disappear, and the mountains and forest play hide-and-seek with the clouds and mist. I waited, ready for the next scene...

1. **Summer blossoms entice the tourists on a walk.**
2. **The Green Dragon Pool in summer.**
3. Winter snow on Wulao Peak.
4. Sunrise over the sea of clouds.

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Old Villas on Lushan

People have long recognized Lushan as a pleasing locale in which to live as well as visit. Real estate development started here a hundred years ago and it has now become one of the best residential areas of China. At the same time, important historical events that shaped the fate of modern China also took place in Lushan.

In the summer of 1885, a Russian missionary took such a fancy to the scenery near the Jiufeng Temple on Longmen Peak, the northern foot of Lushan, that he rented the houses behind the temple's main hall from Hui Dong, the abbot, on a 40-year lease. Although he became the first foreigner to live in a villa on Lushan, this fact was not widely known and didn't set off a real estate boom among the foreigners at the time.

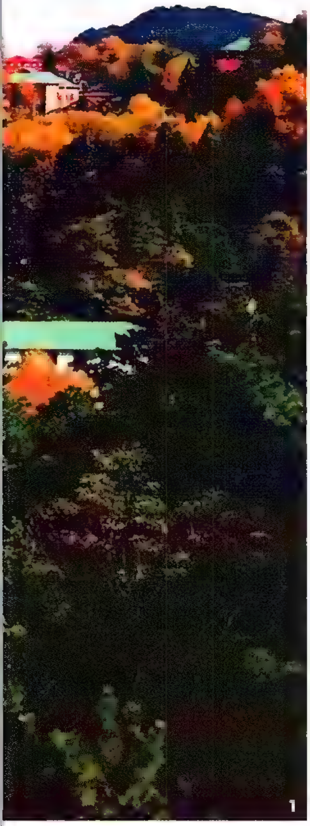
Guling — Transliteration of 'Cooling'

In the winter of the next year, Li Deli, a British man of little more than twenty years, came to Lushan. Young and ambitious, he soon bought the top grade land of Guniuling, Changchong and Gaochong — an area of 4,500 *mu* with a lease of 99 years. He named the area Guling, the transliteration of the English word 'cooling'. That set up Lushan as a popular summer resort and made Li Deli the father of modern real estate here.

Since then, many foreign businessmen, missionaries, ministers and diplomats in China had houses built on Lushan as summer residences. These villas, all of different architecture styles, were

1. Rows of villas in Lushan amid the beautiful autumn colours. (by Li Zhongdong)

2. A representation of the negotiation of the area's first real estate businessman, Li Deli, to buy land at Lushan. (by Huang Yanhong)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surrounded by areas of greenery that were six to seven times the building area. During the 1920s, over 9,000 foreigners from 20 countries, including England, the United States, Germany, Russia, France, Italy and Japan were living in the 800 villas there. It resembled a small United Nations. This development spawned the arrival of a multitude of hotels, ironware stores, barbershops, photo studios and drugstores, which were run by the local Chinese. At the same time, hospitals, a British and American school, cinema, swimming pool and tennis court were also built to serve the foreigners.

Lushan's Contribution to the Modern Chinese History

Among the famous mountains and great rivers Lushan stands tall in the field of politics. Rereading history, we can see that some of modern China's political events were hatched in the quiet rooms on Mt Lushan.

Although the footprints left by top leaders, politicians and high-ranking generals walking the mountain paths of Lushan are untraceable, their political wisdom and diplomacy still fills the air at these historical sites.

Chiang Kai-Shek developed a strong attraction to Lushan on his first visit in 1926 and not long after it became the summer capital of the Republic of China. In the summer of 1938 the Kuomintang's Executive Council moved to Lushan. Zhou Enlai came to Lushan twice in 1937 to gain the Kuomintang's co-operation with Communist Party in the fight against the Japanese invaders, and this resulted in Chiang Kai-Shek agreeing to join forces in this struggle in July 1937. In the summer of 1946, George C. Marshal, special US presidential envoy to China, came to Lushan eight times to mediate the negotiations between the Chinese Communist Party and Kuomintang. After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Lushan was still favoured by the top leaders of the Central Committee and consequently the meetings of the Political Bureau of CPC Central Committee and Eighth Session of the Eighth National Congress of the CPC Central Committee were held there in July 1959. Mao Zedong stayed in Meilu Villa where Chiang Kai-Shek once lived. It was said that when Mao first entered the house he joked, 'President Chiang I'm here.'

Two ministers of the Department of National Defence of China ended their political career in Lushan. One was Peng Dehuai whose political life came to an end at the Central Committee meeting held in Lushan in 1959. The other was Lin Biao, who was harshly criticized by Mao Zedong in the Second Plenary Session of Ninth National Congress of CPC Central Committee held in August 1970. In his Some of My Opinions article, Mao said that Lin Biao was always ready to stir up trouble. A year later, Lin Biao, Mao's presumed successor, died in an air crash in Mongolia as he fled the country.

The political events occuring at Meilu Villa, located by the Changchong riverside in the east of Lushan, have made it somewhat of a legend. Its original owner, Mrs. Herny who worked in Saint

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Hospital in Lushan, gave it to Soong Mei Ling in 1934. After that it became the private mansion of Chiang Kai-Shek and he renamed it Meilu in August 1948.

Tourists can now walk around this villa and imagine what it might have been like in the days of another era when heavily armed guards would keep all visitors away.

The Generals' Taiyi Village

Before the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression a dozen Kuomintang generals and some high-level officials from Guangdong had 18 villas built at the foot of Taiyi Peak on Lushan. With some difficulty, we found this Taiyi Village, or General's Village as it later came to be known, where the generals lived in seclusion.

The first villa we saw was the house of Wu Qiwei,

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a Kuomintang General. As the Commander-in-Chief of the Department of Defence work for the Yangtze River, he was outstanding in the battle against the Japanese invaders' fierce attack on the Three Gorges. The Wanyan villa, the tallest in Taiyi Village, was owned by Wan Gui, the commander of Eighth Division of the Guangdong Army. He first came to Lushan as early as 1926 and it was his idea to establish the Taiyi Village. Liuzhuang was the house of Yan Zhong, once acting chairman of Hubei Province and later known as 'the eccentric of Hubei', who lived in seclusion in the house for about 10 years. The name of Cai Tingka's villa, Sanliuchao, comes from the three (*san*) beautiful Japanese cedars (*liu*). Songzhuang, the villa of Chen Cheng, was no longer in good condition. Unexpectedly, we came across Chiang Kai-Shek's villa, looking no different from the others and about the size of two apartments. It was named Guizhuang for the two sweet-scented osmanthus trees planted in the courtyard by Soong Mei Ling herself. Interestingly, when Chiang Kai-Shek died in Taiwan in 1975 one of the osmanthus trees suddenly withered too.

The assassination attempt on Chiang Kai-Shek's life caused a great sensation there in 1931. Hu Hanmin had been put under house arrest by Chiang Kai-Shek so his subordinates hired Wang Yajiao, the new nation's first assassin, to kill Chiang. In June a dozen assassins dressed like tourists travelled to Lushan with guns hidden in 10 Jinhua hams. When one assassin, Chen Cheng, saw his target he fired twice but missed. He was instead killed by Chiang Kai-Shek's guards.

Stories of the Old Villas

The development exhibition featuring the British

1. The famous Meilu Villa in which both Chiang Kai-Shek and Mao Zedong once stayed. (by Huang Yanhong)

2. The outside wall of Meilu Villa is solid stone. (by Huang Yanhong)

3. The villa where Deng Xiaoping once lived is now open to the public to visit and stay. (by Huang Yanhong)

4. The eye-catching old villas in Guling Town under the lights. (by Huang Yanhong)

中国共产党中央委员会庐山会议旧址
庐山人民剧院

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1. Lushan Hall — where meetings of Central Committee of CPC were held to determine China's fate over the decades. (by Huang Yanhong)

2. The Catholic Church in Lushan. (by Huang Yanhong)

3. It's hard to tell the tourist from the three statues. These lifelike statues reflect a former villa owner's family scene. (by Huang Yanhong)

4. There is no 'immortal' at the Immortal's Cave, only idle people and Taoists. (by Huang Yanhong)

5. The movie *Romance in Lushan* has been shown for 20 years and is still shown today. It is in the Guinness World Records as the longest running film.

missionary Li Deli and the old villa bar with its fragrant tea and country music reminds people of the old days in this Lushan village. Many members of the Presbyterian Ministry escaped the summer heat at their villas at Lushan. The famous American Pearl S. Buck was one of them.

Lushan's most attractive villa is No. 310, which had been built in Guling by the American missionary, Absalom Sydenstriker, the father of Pearl S. Buck. Pearl lived the first 40 years of her life in China, and worked on the manuscript of her first book, *About China*, in this villa. In 1931, her novel The Good Earth was published, describing the lives and times of contemporary Chinese people. Pearl won the Pulitzer Prize for best novel by an American author in 1932 for this book and later the Nobel Prize in literature for the depictions of Chinese life in her many novels and biographies of her parents – the first American woman to win either of these prizes. The film adaptation of her book caused a worldwide sensation, resulting in about 23 million Americans and 43 million Europeans reading her book.

Pearl S. Buck died in 1973 and the former United States President Richard Nixon praised her as 'a bridge connecting the eastern and western civilizations.'

Old He's Memory of the Villas

We met with Old He, a native of Lushan, and discussed the building of villas in Lushan. He said that most were built by foreigners but some had been put up by a few rich Chinese people who came later. There was no drive among the Chinese to develop the land. Li Deli, on the other hand, showed that he was more than capable of promoting home building to the foreigners.

Old He took us to see the old villa where he had lived in childhood. It looked dilapidated. When his father came to Lushan with his elder brother at the age of twelve, there were many people from many other places living there at that time. The Chinese on Lushan made their living by either growing vegetables or working as servants in a foreigner's house. Comparatively speaking, the servant's life was easier and they could earn about 50 kg of rice each month in the job.

The foreigners who came to Lushan in summer all worked in Nanjing at the time. The roads into Lushan were in a bad state then so most of them were carried up the mountain in sedan chairs. Their children went to the American boarding school in Lushan.

Old He told his story: I worked in a house that had been built and owned by two American friends. A movable partition allowed the small rooms to become one huge room for parties where they would sing, dance and play accordion to their heart's content. We servants lived in the basement and never went into guests' rooms, never mind joined in the parties.

My mother often washed clothes, removed night soil, cleaned the house and grew flowers for the foreigners, and was often given money for any extra work. My sister was good at catching butterflies and would give the beautiful ones she caught to the masters of the house, pleasing them immensely. In addition she picked wild flowers which the women of the house appreciated. They often gave her money but she never took the initiative to find ways to make more money.

Lushan was occupied by the Japanese for more than six years during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression. When the Kuomintang withdrew from the mainland of China in 1949 the villas' owners, reluctantly, also left Lushan. Before leaving they took some pictures for my family.

Before the Kuomintang came to Lushan the local bandits were wild and robbery was common. Once four or five bandits came to our house with guns on their shoulders and torches in their hands. They stole some clothes and a pipe that had been given to the foreigner.

The year before last the two Americans returned to see their old house and tried to find us too. Unfortunately all our former neighbours had moved away and no one could tell them where we were.

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吉尼斯世界纪录
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Romance
循环放映不清场
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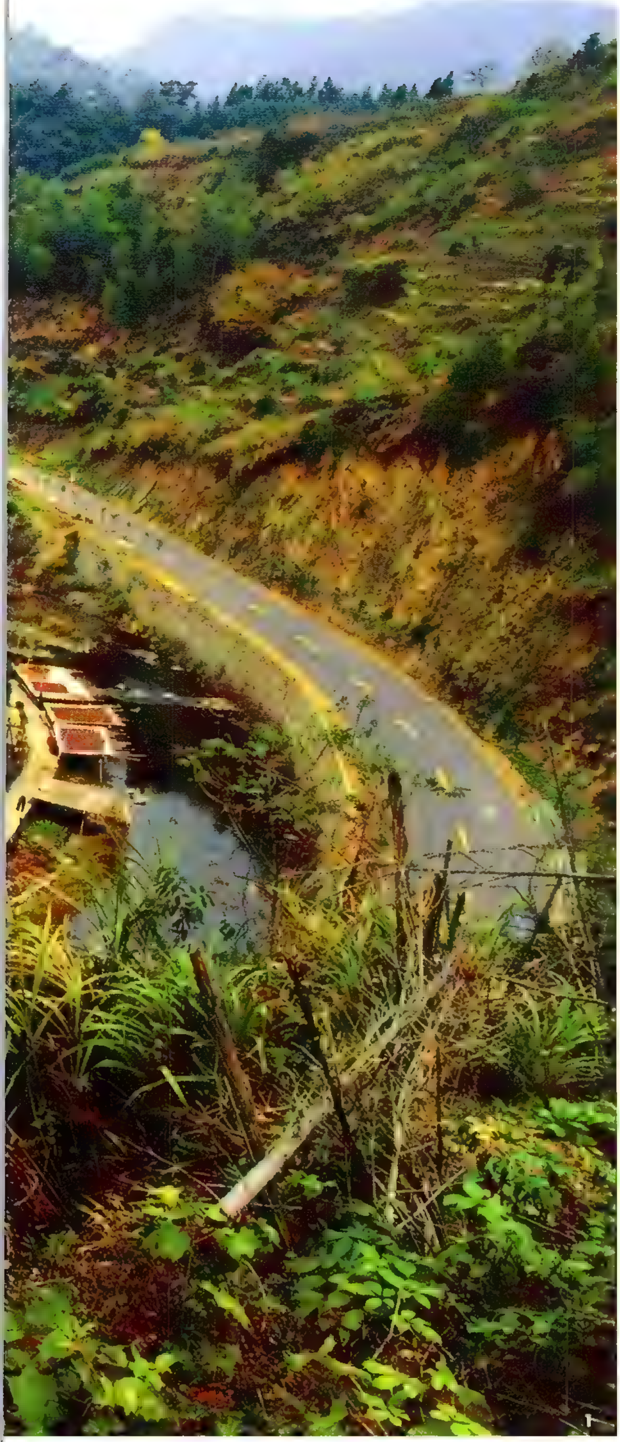
Wuyuan Getaway

It was in the light drizzle of March in Wuyuan that we went seeking a slice of quiet country life in a quaint village. We found it at Likeng. It's the sort of village where all your needs can be met with one family, where you can wander at leisure to the soundtrack of farm animals, feast on fresh farm fare, shoot the breeze by the river at sunset... The three days flew past — we wished it was longer.

The rain poured down when we first arrived in Tuochuan Township, about a kilometre from Likeng (理坑). We found ourselves surrounded by well-preserved villages, such as Hedong and Hexi, as well as Huang Village a few kilometres away. The locals tell us that 97% of Tuochuan Township



1. Overlooking Jujing Village from the nearby hills — the river does a graceful 'U-turn' here. (by Li Jingdong)

residents have the surname Yu. The Yu's ancestral hall is right at Huang Village.

Yew Pine for a Prosperous Village

The rain subsided and we made our way to Huang Village. From a distance we could see a covered bridge, next to which stood the famous yew pine. When the Yu clan's ancestors first migrated here, they performed a geomancy test by planting the yew pine upside down; if it lived it would mean the place would provide them with a good life.

The tree actually survived! Thus more migrants came, and after a thousand years, the trees before us were leafy and strong. In the annals of time, the yew pine has always been the sacred tree of the Yu clan. Villagers say that the trees flourish and the village also thrives, and that it's been like that for hundreds of years.

As soon as we got to the village, kids crowded around us out of curiosity. They were our little guides as well as excellent photo subjects, though we had to remind them not to touch the camera lenses with their hands.

Nearby, an ancient covered bridge stood across the creek, built when the village produced its own Jinshi (advanced scholar). There used to be two, referred to as the double bridges of scholar officials, but one was destroyed during the 'cultural revolution'.

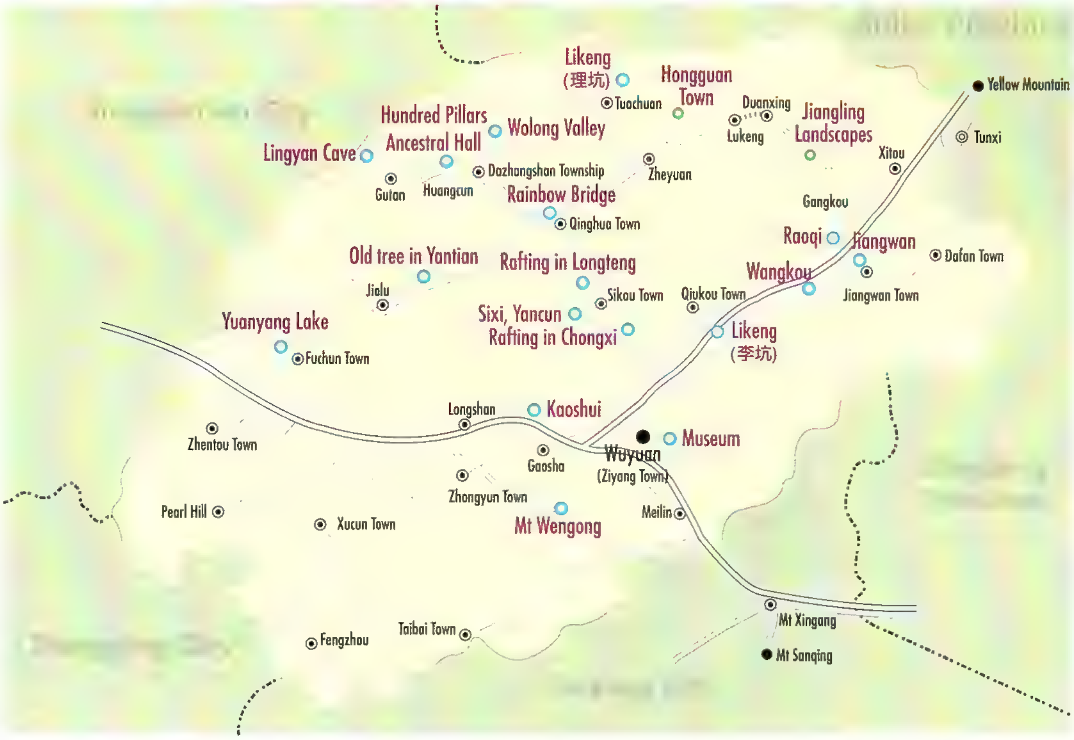
We found some well-preserved historic residences in the village with fine brick carvings, stone sculptures and wooden carvings; the oldest is an ancestral hall built at the end of the Ming dynasty, but unfortunately the gate was shut.

The second morning we made our way to Likeng, by which time the rain had completely stopped and a thick mist had risen, blurring our vision of ploughing oxen, farmers and children, and a herd of Likeng-bound photographers who resembled mythical figures wafting in the mist.

The mist dissipated as we walked in the village, drifting across the coursing river and receding behind the mountain. On both banks of the river, residences stood in traditional elegant style with white walls and black roofs, having kept their austere appeal even after renovations. The soothing sound of women washing laundry combined with the soft gurgling of the water were a heavenly concerto. A few big dogs made their rounds imperiously, crossing the bridge, or patrolling the river banks, paying special attention to visitors, but keeping a gentle demeanour — no

2. There's no better way to relax than sit in the sun on a bamboo chair next to the river. (by Huang Yanhong)

Distribution Map of Ancient Villages in Wuyuan


Likeng
(理坑)
Hongguan
Town
Tuochuan
Duanxing
Lukeng
Jiangling
Landscapes
Yellow Mountain
Tunxi
Hundred Pillars
Ancestral Hall
Wolong Valley
Lingyan Cave
Gutan
Huangcun
Dazhangshan Township
Zheyuan
Xitou
Rainbow Bridge
Qinghua Town
Gangkou
Raoqi
Hongwan
Dafan Town
Old tree in Yantian
Rafting in Longteng
Wangkou
Jialu
Sikou Town
Qiukou Town
Jiangwan Town
Yuanyang Lake
Fuchun Town
Sixi, Yancun
Rafting in Chongxi
Likeng
(李坑)
Longshan
Kaoshui
Museum
Zhentou Town
Gaosha
Wuyuan
(Ziyang Town)
Pearl Hill
Zhongyun Town
Meilin
Xucun Town
Mt Wengong
Mt Xingang
Mt Sanqing
Fengzhou
Taibai Town

1. Though Wuyuan has many single-plank bridges, they're fast disappearing. This is the one at Lingxia Village. (by Li Jingdong)

2. The ancient village is encircled by ribbons of smoke from cooking fires in the crisp early morning. (by Li Jingdong)

3. Mushroom farms near Mount Dazhangshan.

barking, no attacking. On narrow paths, they would even stop first and let the tourist cross.

Breezes at the Bridge

Tianxin (Heart of Heaven) Bridge in the middle of the village is a centre of activity for the villagers, with the railings on both sides of the bridge serving as vegetable-drying racks. Locals explained: the mountains and water are drawn to this place, and when they linger, the result in beautiful scenery. The bridge is a perfect place for cooling off, not least because even during the height of summer, there are no mosquitoes on the bridge.

Not far from Tianxin Bridge is the Baizi (Hundred Sons) Bridge. Though small, it is known for its good luck, hence, it's a 'must-pass bridge' for celebrations such as weddings.

We made a special trip to the Widow's Bridge at the river's upper reaches, located in the rice fields outside the village. This bridge, only occasionally used by the villagers, was simple in design — three stone slabs. The middle slab was donated by a widow who made shoes for customers and saved her income to build the bridge. Strangely enough, the slab she donated was always free from dew in the mornings. It is a touching story often retold by the villagers as testament to the heavens clearly seeing our good deeds. Alas, these stories are much more scarce in our time.

The streaming waters of the river made me ponder — there must be other such poignant village stories that had disappeared like the proverbial water under the bridge.

We stayed three days in Likeng, at the home of Yu Wanqin. He is the third generation of a family of carpenters who specialize in making round wooden furniture, such as buckets and bowls. Mr Yu showed me a beautiful set of carpenter's tools left to him by his father. After high school, he didn't want to study his way to an official post nor make a living from working the land; instead he decided to learn the skills of a carpenter from his father.

Yu's house is very old, likely the legacy of a large well-to-do family. There are still woodcarvings around the soaring atrium while the guest room is simply decorated and rather dark, necessitating lights even during the day. The old wooden bed offered a closer link to life in another time.

Mr Yu and his wife are both warm-hearted souls with hardworking hands. We made ourselves at home, sometimes eating their usual food with them, and at other times, our group's Mr Wang volunteered to show off his Shanghai style culinary skills. For lunch that day, we asked our host to buy a red purse carp — a carp with a small head a tail but a large belly like a pouch. Legend has it that Yu Maoxue, Minister of Works, came back from Beijing with two such fish bestowed by the emperor, and this dish later became so popular that it is now a 'must-try dish' for visitors.

Old-fashioned Village Morning Call

We woke very early in the morning, alerted by roosters that were more punctual than alarm clocks, with automatic repeat, and no snooze option. Once one starts crowing, every rooster in the vicinity answers exuberantly.

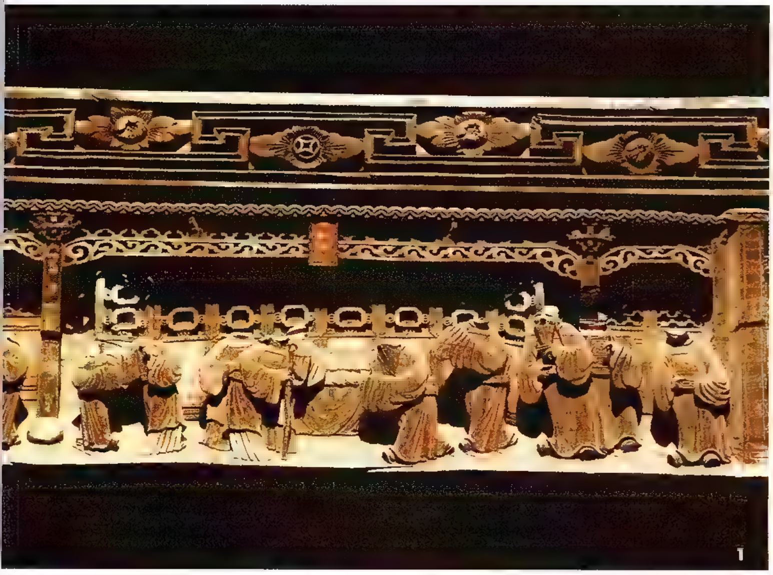
After our hostess made us breakfast, we went for a walk in the misty morning of the countryside, greeting and being greeted in return by farmers carrying tools and leading their ploughing oxen. It was a refreshing change for us city slickers.

You know you've lived in the city for too long when your courtesy has diminished and you treat everyone with wariness. Here you'll suddenly find yourself more light-hearted and readily breaking into a smile, as life should be.

Walking past a house, we saw some paintings inside. We found the artist, Yu Caobin, van 85-year-old amateur painter and farmer who said he's always liked painting. He learnt when he was herding cattle, drawing with rocks on the ground since he couldn't afford pens or brushes. When asked what he painted, he replied that he's always loved watching Chinese opera and so paints that from memory.

I noticed that the paintings on the wall were all from the 'cultural revolution' — scenes from model Peking operas like 'Taking Tiger Mountain By Strategy', 'Attacking White Tiger Brigade', 'Shajia Bang'. The strokes were simple — but full of pizzazz. Every painting was dated, with the earliest one being from 1971.

I asked to buy a painting. He shook his head and said a few years ago someone had bought paintings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1. Wood carvings — once exquisite, now ravaged during the 'cultural revolution'. (by Huang Yanhong)

2. Wood laundry tubs next to the well in Likeng (理坑) Village. (by Huang Yanhong)

3. For 800 years the Rainbow Bridge has stood the test of time. (by Huang Yanhong)

for 100 yuan each, of scenes from operas like the 'White Haired Girl and Tale of the Red Lamp'. Now he regrets it and doesn't want to sell anymore.

No Better Life than This

The most beautiful time of the day in Likeng is dusk, when those camera and lens toting photographers have beaten a retreat and the ubiquitous sun hats of group tourists have followed their guides' flags out of the village, leaving only the villagers and a few of us staying with local families to welcome the quiet that descended upon the village.

We sat by the river chatting with the villagers. As the dogs laying at our feet began to regard us with less animosity and the sounds of women washing clothes came up from beneath the stone steps, it seemed for a moment that we were also villagers resting in front of our own homes, contented and at peace with the world. One tourist was even more determined to live like the locals and she carried over a pile of clothes, borrowed a washing stick and began beating the laundry at the river's edge. She turned and asked: 'Do I look like a village girl?'

Then, Shi Wangxin, the son-in-law of Yu called came over to chat. He usually lives in Lingjiao Village dozens of kilometres away and has been making a living out of gathering herbs for medicine for 20 years. He complained that in recent years demand for the inexpensive herbal medicines had dropped, forcing him to find another job. Now he uses his physical stamina and familiarity with the mountains in the role of a tourist guide. He leads people across the mountains and hills, through the villages of Wuyuan. Yesterday afternoon he had led a tour group on a five hour hike from mount Zhangshan to Likeng.

Ageless Beauty

The beauty of Wuyuan is multi-faceted: the natural environment in which tranquil and elegant villages lay, country folk customs steeped in history, tale upon tale of the past. Don't overlook the old bridges, ancient houses, halls and schools... behind each of these historical buildings are fascinating stories from another age.

Rainbow Bridge is touted as China's most beautiful covered bridge and has charmed visitors for 800 years. As we walked across this bridge built in the Southern Song Dynasty, we couldn't help but admire the man behind its creation — a monk named Hu Jixiang of Qinghua Village. He travelled around the country seeking donations for three years to raise funds for the bridge. Then bridge builder Hu Yongban

took over the design and the construction that lasted more than four years. Though he followed Buddhism, Hu had not completely lost his feelings for his hometown and its people. That's why villagers built a shrine for three statues — Hu Jixiang, Hu Yongban, and Da Yu. But Da Yu, the Xia Dynasty's first ruler and legendary promoter of flood control techniques, was unable to defend the area against the flood of 1983 that destroyed the three pavilions. Da Yu and the other two bridge-building heroes were swept away overnight from the bridge they protected. Thankfully the bridge remained, and after minor repairs, it once again showed off its loveliness.

The 140-metre Rainbow Bridge has six stone bridge piers built like the bow of a ship, making it resemble warships charging ahead in the raging sea. Each pier's pavilion is connected by corridors. The structure of the covered bridge is simple: solid logs and all wood joints that keep it together without the use of one nail. It was a stunning feat of engineering from the master builders of yesteryear. At its sides are two parallel bridges, one made of wood and shaped like the letter 'Y' while the other is simply a series of stepping stones connecting the riverbanks. A common sight at Rainbow Bridge is tourists hopping from stone to stone, a practice that brings out the child in everyone.

From the stepping stones, an appealing pattern of the shapes and lines of the six pavilions and five corridors is clearly reflected in the water. On the Qinghua Old Street there is still a square pond from the days when patriot hero Yue Fei stationed troops here.

Modest Official Residences and Opulent Merchants' Mansions

The understated grandeur of Wuyuan can be found at Likeng in its cluster of typical official residences.

Likeng was built at the end of the Northern Song dynasty and its ancestors can be traced back to Tongcheng of Anhui. Through an era of scholarly pursuits and culture over hundreds of years this village has produced 36 senior officials and16 advanced scholars — evidence of Likeng's past days of glory. But these officials' residences are far from being ostentatious or luxurious. You would hardly know the status of its original inhabitants, were it not for their descendants inscribing signs such as House of Sima or House of Shangshu on the door lintels.

The Songyou Hall here stands empty and is rarely visited by tourists. Villagers say that during the 'cultural revolution' Songyou Hall was turned into a huge mess hall and even now the main entrance still bears the slogan of the time 'In Agriculture, Learn From Dazhai'. A few stone tablets that had seen better days lay in the dappled light, silent testimonials to the times gone by. One was inscribed with the characters 'imperial command' while another one was a sign banning forest fires from the fourth year in the Jiaqing period of the Qing dynasty. This is the former residence of Yu Ziyi, Guangzhou mayor of the Chongzhen period in the Ming dynasty. Yu's integrity and honesty throughout his years in politics was such that he couldn't even afford to buy his own coffin. Finally the imperial government, in a touching and rare story, allotted funds to build this residence for him.

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When we went to settle our account with our host, Mr Yu, before leaving, he suggested we pay what we thought appropriate. In this day and age, it's rare and refreshing to find someone who cares so little about money.

The village of Yancun tells of Wuyuan's past prosperity. It is historically known for its traders and business tycoons. The houses that remain were mostly built in the Qianlong and Jiaqing periods of Qing dynasty. At its height the village had four ancestral halls and over a hundred mansions — all connected. Back then, rain or snow was no cause to rush because villagers could walk through the entire village without getting wet. Every house was also a 'corridor' that others could use as thoroughfare. It is communal living of a scale that defies the imagination of modern-day people: it's not only a corridor in physical terms but also a reflection of the villagers' friendly relations with each other. The sands of time have seen the demise of many houses, but the 56 that remain are still seen as examples of 'merchants mansions'.

There is a thousand year old street at Wangkou Village. Strolling along the streets made of black stone slabs is like stepping back to a slower time without mobile phones, computers, television or motorised

1. Shicheng is a little more remote, thereby retaining more of its traditional features. (by Li Jingdong)

2. Sixi Village kids sit in old-style wood buckets to keep warm. (by Huang Yanhong)

3. The stepping stones parallel to the Rainbow Bridge are a great place for tourists to become athletic. (by Huang Yanhong)

1. The classically elegant Likeng (李坑) Village. (by Huang Yanhong)

2. Likeng (李坑) Village has been open to tourism for more than a decade and is now a favourite among tourists. (by Huang Yanhong)

3. Old-style residences of Likeng (李坑) village are a major tourist draw. (by Huang Yanhong)

vehicles. At the foot of the tall fortifying walls, the rows of Anhui style traditional buildings peek out and add to the feeling of a time warp.

This village is famed for its Yu ancestral hall, which stands at the village entrance — the first thing you see once you cross the bridge. The power of the clan in Wuyuan is not to be underestimated — every village has ancestral halls for different clans and every hall has public property such as shared land, land for volunteers, land for sacrifices and land for education. The ancestral hall is the heart and soul of each clan.

The Yu ancestral hall is a three storey building with double courtyards and a Xieshan style roof Its best part is the 'gate house of five phoenixes', something that was historically only allowed in the imperial palace. Its existence is the work of villager Yu Xinyuan, who once taught the Qing emperor and was given special privileges to build it to proclaim his pride for the town. Each and every wood structure in the ancestral hall is carved, with over a hundred patterns that each tell a wonderful tale or symbolise something auspicious. The timber used is very special — thousand year old sandalwood, which naturally repels spiders and other insects. Spider webs are not so common here.

Of all the ancestral halls in Wuyuan, the best known is the Baizhu (Hundred Pillars) Ancestral Hall, found at Huangcun of Gutan Xiang. In 1982, at the China Folk Customs Expo held in the Pompidou in Paris, the Chinese entrance was a replica of the Baizhu ancestral hall. It caught the attention of anthropologists from all over the world.

Since my surname is Huang, naturally I had to pay homage to the Huang's ancestral hall. We made a special detour on the way back from Likeng to the Baizhu ancestral hall, which was built in the Kangxi period of the Qing dynasty. There are 99 main pillars inside and locals say that hardly anyone can count all the pillars without marking them as they go.

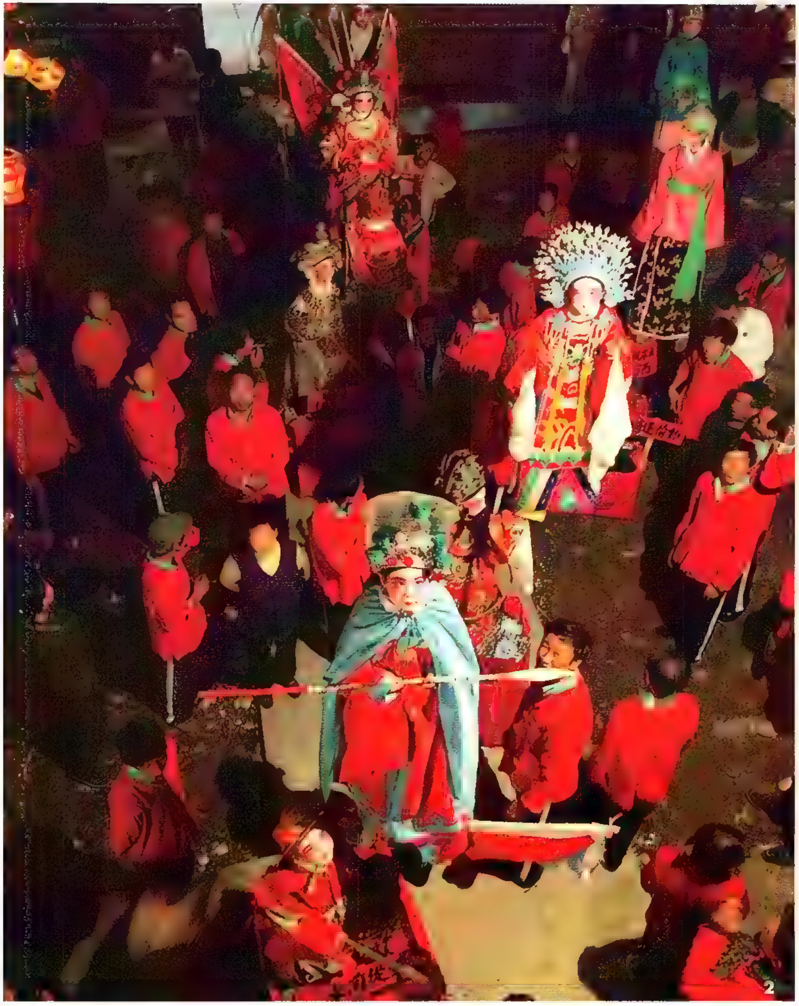
Night Festivity in Wuyuan

Photo & Article · Adam Wong

The 'piaose' (Bun Festival) shows of Foshan in Guangdong and Hong Kong's Cheung Chau may already be familiar to most readers but Wuyuan's Jialu Township has a similar ritual — the 'taige' (抬閣) or lifting of the sedan chair. The differences are that the 'taige' takes place only at night while the Bun Festival occurs in the daytime, and wherever the 'taige' procession goes, fireworks are lit and the characters in the parade seem to glow mysteriously in the fiery light.

A friend guided us as we drove to Jialu Township, about 50 km west of Wuyuan County. Seeing the child actors up on the metal stands, I realized that this mysterious festive ritual was similar to Cheung Chau's colourful street procession. In both, the girls and boys are dressed as period characters and strapped onto metal stands that carry them around like fairies flying in the sky. Another difference is that in Cheung Chau the children are on stilts while those in the 'taige' are carried in four-person sedan chairs.

Even the elderly villagers at Jialu Township's Taige are at a loss to explain its origins besides saying that it is a ritual passed down from their ancestors long ago. Like other village festive rituals, it is used to ward off evil spirits, pray for peace and celebrate harvests. There is no definite schedule for 'taige' — but it usually takes place around Chinese New Year, if there has been a bountiful harvest, or if there are celebrations and festivals. Its popularity has even spurred other villages to invite the performers to tour. Worth noting is that because 'taige' happens after dark, the long procession winds its way along the narrow village streets, welcomed by firecrackers and fireworks wherever it goes. In the flickering firelight, the characters on the 'Ge' (chair) appear more mysterious than ever.



1. After a 'mysterious makeover', the hero finally emerges and is carefully carried out by a number of adults.

2. As they set off, the children dressed up in traditional garb seem like 'living sculptures'.

'Taige' is not at all like the New Year parades in the cities. It is much more down to earth and au naturel, with a charm that's largely owed to the show's child stars. Some are turned into strapping 'generals'; some appear as gorgeous 'fairies' or characters from Chinese legends like the Monkey King or White Snake Fairy.

In fact, the children who are chosen become 'stars' in the village and those who have been in the parades are accorded extra praise. They enjoy higher status in the village or at school and the 'stardust' even seems to rub off onto family members.

Yaoli—The Fading Home of Porcelain

Yaoli gave rise to the porcelain industry of Jingdezhen. Located in the area of the Raohe river delta and bordered on the east by Wuyuan County and Anhui Province on the north, Yaoli has had porcelain workshops here as far back as the mid-Tang dynasty. In its heyday, there were over 30 porcelain producers, with 88 kilns and 380 water-powered trip-hammers.

1. Yaoli's Raonan Village used to rely primarily on the making of china. (by Huang Yanhong)

2. Ancient water-mills are a common sight along the Raohe River. (by Ye Jun)

3. The water-mill powers the trip-hammer that crushes the Gaoling clay. (by Huang Yanhong)

Yaoli enjoys a natural advantage. The main material for the fine porcelain of Jingdezhen — Gaoling clay, or Kaolin clay — come from Gaoling mountain near Yaoli. Everything related to the porcelain-making industry, from mines, kilns and workshops, to canals and trails, docks, markets and villages are here. Yaoli was originally named after the word for kiln — *yao*.

After the Ming dynasty, Yaoli gradually lost its status as porcelain producer to Jingdezhen and simply became a source of raw materials. By the Qing dynasty, tea had replaced porcelain as the main economic driver.

The Earliest Porcelain Workshops

Along Raohe River there are several workshops; some are disused, others are still in operation. The water-powered trip-hammers for crushing the porcelain clay have, throughout the ages, been simple but effective machines to pound clay — crush, wash, filter, trudge, sift, make into bricks day and night... Now, this thousand year old jargon is used by just a handful of porcelain makers.

In the ruins of Raonan porcelain-making district, you'll find ancient kilns and pieces of old porcelain everywhere.

There was a water mill, with the straw-shack of a trip-hammer workshop next to it. Since historical times, porcelain making has relied on these ancient hydro-powered grinders, surprisingly automated and environmentally friendly, to crush the clay. A man, a 65 year old native of Raonan Village and surnamed Xu, was adding material in the hammer pit. He said he had been here since five o'clock in the morning, doing all there was to do, such as adding the clay, grinding, rinsing... Of the four workshop workers here, Old Xu is the eldest and the others were all much younger.

When I went in, the 11 trip-hammers were all working in unison. Old Xu said four families shared the water mill workshop and whoever wanted scraps would come to operate it in the morning. Each water mill can only be used for three years so the 400 yuan cost for a new one is shared by the families. In the second half of the year the water levels are low, not enough to drive the water mill, so production is limited to the months after Chinese New Year.

Piles of Old China

At Old Xu's workshop, I saw four tanks with different functions organized in a square — one for washing, another that allows settling and two for solidifying. Xu and his peers are not in the kiln-firing business; they simply provide the enamel bricks for Jingdezhen.

The ground porcelain powder is poured into the wash basin; water is added to rinse and then a little lime powder is added to clarify the water. The resulting slurry is transferred to the settling tank and plaster powder is added to accelerate the precipitation. Then the slurry is placed into the bodying tank for further precipitation. In order to reduce the bubbles and mix the slurry, it is necessary to step into the basin and trudge with one's feet three to four times once every three days. Old Xu says this is no easy task as the slurry is about half a metre deep and very thick. It is such a tiring task that one can hardly lift the feet afterwards. Because this is a time- and energy-consuming job, two bodying tanks are used alternately, so as to save waiting time.

Afterwards, some bricks are placed in the basin to speed up the drying. Used bricks are dried in the shade, not in the sun. Finally the porcelain clay is placed into prepared moulds and made into brick blocks. One tank of porcelain clay usually takes three days to process into enamel bricks.

'Each enamel brick sells for two yuan at Jingdezhen We don't have the materials, so we only earn the processing fee of 0.28 yuan per brick,' Xu told me. I did the sums. Every day they can process on average about 70 bricks so that means a monthly income of just 500 yuan. Such hard work for such little pay — it's no wonder the number of people in the business is dwindling. Xu is the only one of his family still in this low-income job. Aside from one son who tends the home farm, all the other children have gone to work elsewhere.

Old Xu told us that in the beginning everyone was making porcelain. There were hammer pits and

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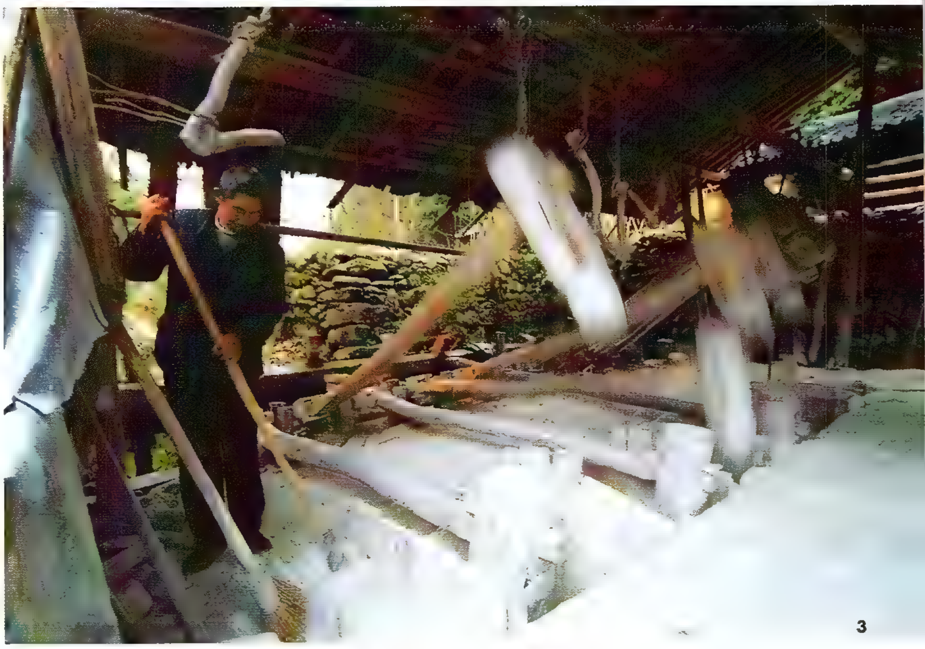
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1. Residences in Yaoli's ancient lanes. (by Huang Yanhong)

2. The view from the stone bridge takes in all of Yaoli. (by Zheng Jianfu)

workshops all along the river was taken up by hammer pits, and over a hundred water-mills. Now all that remains are the kiln relics from the Song dynasty and other items that were used in that time.

Next, we headed along the Raohe River to see a top historical site, the dragon-kiln. This huge melting pot used in the making of porcelain in the southern Song period is about 50 metres long and extends majestically upwards along the slope in the shape of a dragon.

We learned from the locals that this typical private kiln had mainly produced porcelain wares for daily use and we could see the nearby hills were strewn with broken pieces of ancient china. Most had surnames and lucky inscriptions underneath to denote the manufacturer, indicating that these kilns were a shared family business. Later, at the porcelain museum in town we also saw many pieces of china with only simple numerals at the bottom.

It was our first time facing a 'mountain' of vintage china and it was tempting to pick up a piece to take home. No one dared though, as there was a stiff fine of 500 yuan for every piece pilfered.

Yaoli Town — Prosperity Via Porcelain

The glory of Yaoli's past is evident in the township. For years, the people all along the river, even up to the source of the Raohe River, were involved in the scroll painting trade. There used to be several dozen dams and scroll painting processing plants. Then came the production, processing and trade in china, bringing popularity and prosperity to the town, as well as cultural refinement.

The old town is nestled in mountains and divided into east and west by a small river. On both banks are paths of stone slabs, along which the hustle and bustle of small town commerce treads.

An old stone bridge leads one to the residences, from which happy schools of fish in Raohe River are visible. We were astonished by the unspoilt character of this environment. This is due to a voluntary organization that put up signs at the bridge banning fishing, and day and night patrols, which hand out heavy fines for illegal fishing.

The town seems to sigh under the burden of its history. Although each house has wells symbolising treasures pouring in from all directions, economic development has been slow to reach the town. In a way, this has helped protect the ancient town from the destruction seen elsewhere.

The finest building here is the Cheng's ancestral hall, and while it's not large, the extremely delicate craftsmanship has turned the entire building into a stunning work of art. Every part, from the brick carving on the main gate's lintels, the eaves' brackets and cornices, to the wooden carvings on the doors, windows, pillars and brackets, and the still visible coloured ceiling patterns are a pleasure to see.

Historical Huirao Trade Route and Red Army Bridge

Keep going along the Raohe River and you'll arrive at Meiling Village. There are over 100 households here that make their living mostly from tea, tea seeds and tea tree oil.

Outside the village is a Qing dynasty stone arch bridge officially called Guanyun (cloud-watching) Bridge, and unofficially, the Red Army bridge since the red army crossed it. The arch is about eight metres in height, with a span of 14 metres. Its ancient, large black tile roof provides welcome shelter against the elements. Keep walking, about 380 steps ahead, to find the historic Huirao trade route's signature pavilion. Villagers say that the route was as important to Anhui as it was for the traders — they produced the rice that traders passing through wanted to buy and the traders brought the salt that the villagers needed.

Years of timber transport had caused the black stone slabs in the middle of the route to show signs of caving in. The route stopped at the road, near the pavilion that was used as a rest stop. In earlier times, Meiling Village appointed someone to live there permanently and prepare drinking water for passers-by, and in return, the other villagers would tend his two mu of land.

In those days, several different committees organized the public business of the village — one for bridges, roads, culture and military. Matters regarding the route were naturally decided by the road committee, which controlled 5 *mu* of land. Fire prevention at the village was also funded by a public reserve of land.

The soul of the village is the Zhang's ancestral hall. Its present version, built at the start of the Ming dynasty, consists of a grand compound with three halls and two atriums. It used to belong to the clan surnamed Zhu, but because they were poor and the hall's upkeep was paid by the Zhang clan, it later renamed Chongben Hall.

Chongben Hall is a rather cavernous space. Locals said there used to be couplet poems on all of the pillars, where were not painted on but burnt on with pieces of china. It is a reflection of the village's extreme devotion to the culture of china making.

Translated by Cheng Lei

3. The historic covered bridge near Meiling village is on the Huirao historical trade route. (by Huang Yanhong)

4. The dilapidated kiln from the Song dynasty in its original layout. (by Huang Yanhong)

5. Yaoli healthy river eco-system is a paradise for birds. (by Huang Yanhong)

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Travel Tips for Mt Lushan and Wuyuan Town

(by Li Zhongdeng)

Mt Lushan

Transport

By air: Lushan airport is served by flights to Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Chengdu, Nanning, Guangzhou, Xiamen, Haikou, flights to more Chinese cities also depart from nearby Nanchang Airport.

By land: Lushan is about 36 km south of Jiujiang, about an hour by car; there is a daily bus to the mountain from Nanchang bus terminal, the trip is 2.5 hours.

By rail: There are many direct trains from Lushan train station to major cities like Guangzhou, Beijing, Xi'an, and Wuhan.

By ship: Lushan is at the southern shore of the Yangtze River's middle reaches, take a tourist bus from Jiujiang Port — the journey to Lushan takes over an hour. Every day there are 14 ferries that stop at Jiujiang port, the ferry between Jiujiang and Hankou departs Hankou every night at 19:00 and arrives the second morning; it departs Jiujiang from 18:00 and arrives in Hankou at 08:00. In addition, there are two speedboat services every day between Wuhan and Jiujiang — shortening the journey to 4 hours; because ferries on the Yangtze River are affected by the weather, enquire specific timetables by calling the ferry services hotline: (792) 822 2087.

Admission to Lushan: December in 2007 is off-peak season for Lushan tourism; peak-season is from April to the end of November. In the off-peak season admission costs 135 yuan; while peak-season admission is 180 yuan; tourists receive personal accidental insurance worth 80,000 yuan with their admission.

Sunrise Spotting

Watching sunrises at Lushan is a special tourist draw. The best places include Pokou, Lianhua Gu (Lotus Valley), Wulao Feng (Peak of Five Elders).

Where To Go — Latest Recommendations

Tales Of Old Villas: Between Donggu Zhongsan Road and Zhongsi Road in Lushan, a successfully run attraction that presents the history of Lushan villas in an easy to digest form, excellent for history buffs. Admission: 30 yuan

Popular Itineraries

Lushan Itinerary A: Take the tourist bus from Guling Jie to Huajing (Flower Path), Jinxiu Gu (Brocade Valley), Xianren Dong (Fairy's Cave), Da Tianchi (Big Heavenly Pool), Longshou Ya (Dragon Head Cliff), Huanglong Tan (Yellow Dragon Pool), Wulong Tan (Black Dragon Pool), Sanbao Shu (Three Treasure Trees), Shimen Jian (Stone Gate Ravine), Lulin Hu (Reeds Lake), the museum, Lushan conference site, Meilu villas.

Lushan Itinerary B: Take a bus from Guling Jie to Hanpo Kou, botanical gardens, Wulao Feng (five elders peak), Sandie Quan (three fold springs).

By foot: Strolling around Guling Jie market is very pleasant, or walk to Xiao Tianchi (Lesser Heavenly Pool) to watch the sunset, or to Nuona Ta (Nuona Tower), Yuezhao Songlin (Moonlight on Pine Forests), the library, etc.

Accommodation

Lushan has many accommodation choices, but even that's not enough during peak season such as Golden Week holidays.

Prestige:

Lushan Villas Hotel: 179 Lushan Donggu Zhihong Road, about a hundred metres from Guling Jie, standard rooms 480 yuan/ room.

Medium priced:

Guling Hotel: 104 Hedong Road, Lushan, medium priced, standard rooms 100 yuan/ room.

Lushan Hotel is at 1044, Lushan Zhengjie, standard rooms cost 180 yuan/ room.

Lushan Plaza: Adjacent to the Lushan Conference Site, standard rooms are 180 yuan/ room.

If your budget allows, staying at one of the Lushan celebrity villas is a unique experience. Now most celebrities' villas are open to the public, like the former residence of Marshal Ye Jianying: renting the entire building costs 8,800 yuan, deluxe rooms cost 880 yuan.

(by Xu Jinghui)

If you're looking for something more agreeably priced, try the school run accommodation, rooms usually cost around 60 yuan. There are also many private hotels in Lushan — all reasonably priced, one that is highly recommended by tourism websites is Auntie Huang family hotel, where meals can be provided, Tel: (792) 820 8395.

Wuyuan Town

Transport

There are half-hourly buses from Jingdezhen to Wuyuan, tickets are about 20 yuan; two buses serve Huangshan (Yellow mountain) and Wuyuan per day, tickets cost approximately 40 yuan; there is one daily bus from Sanqing Shan to Wuyuan, tickets are about 15.

Wuyuan is very handy as a base to travel to other sights, there are mini-buses from the station in Ziyang Town to various towns and villages; or you could charter a van that seats up to ten, within 300 yuan; the county's fruit wholesale market is also full of farmer vehicles from the villages, mainly leaving from the villages and going back at noon, but be prepared for a crowded and rocky ride in the back.

Admission for Wuyuan's Main Attractions

Qinghua Town 10 yuan; Tuochuan Likeng 20 yuan; Baizhu Zongci (hundred pillars ancestral hall) 5 yuan; Xiaojiang Ancestral Hall 50 yuan, Jingyi Tang 20 yuan; Likeng 30 yuan; Wangkou 25 yuan; Xiaoqi 20 yuan; Qingyuan 20 yuan; Yancun, Sixi 36 yuan; Caihong Qiao (Rainbow Bridge) 20 yuan; Likeng (including Tuokou, Huang village) 20; Zheyuan 5 yuan; Hongguan Ancient Village 10 yuan; Dazhang Shan scenic area 55 yuan; Yantian Ancient Camphor Garden 25 yuan; Yuanyang Lake 40 yuan.

Note: many of Wuyuan's sights offer 20 ~ 50% discount to student card holders; journalists, artists, photographers, writers and musicians can enjoy free admission if they show effective ID from authorities above city level; senior citizens aged above 60 can get 50% off admission if they have the right ID, those over 70 enjoy free admission with proper ID.

Accommodation in Ziyang Town (county seat)

Wuyuan Renjia HQ travellers' rest stop (Jinsheng Hotel), enjoy free Internet access if you have your own laptop, Tel: (793) 749 0043; Lvyuan Hotel (to-be two-star), Wuyuan county, No.26, Wengong Nanlu, Ziyang Town, Tel: 137 0703 5191.

Wuyuan's Main Towns

■ Sikou Town

Sixi, Yancun villages — with their typical groups of traders' mansions, all belong to the town of Sikou. They are located about 18 km to the town's northwest. Sixi: about half a kilometre from Yancun village, is packed with old buildings. If you happen to be there on a foggy morning, the Tongji bridge in the thin veil of mist is as beautiful as any Chinese ink brush painting.

(by Li Zhongdong)

Transport: served by buses from the town.

Accommodation: **Sikou Town Yiyi Hotel**, Tel: (793) 733 5822.

Yingyou Guesthouse, Tel: (793) 733 5107

Qinghua Rainbow Bridge

An ancient bridge dating back to the Song dynasty, Rainbow Bridge is the oldest tourist site in Wuyuan.

Transport: very close to the town, served by shuttle buses.

Accommodation: Qinghua branch of the **Qingyuan Hotel** Contact teacher Hu: 139 7937 3513.

Gu Yueju, contact: Hu Qingxiong Tel: (793) 724 2882.

Likeng

Likeng's street scenes are worth photographing - with their criss-crossing streets and alleys, traditional style residences on both sides of the river.

Transport : buses depart from the town to Likeng; or take a motorcycle cab from Qinghua town.

Accommodation: Choose from many family style hotels, especially the home of Yu Wanqin.

Liyuan Resort, 77 Likeng Village Tel: (793) 724 7878.

Likeng Xibian Xiaozhu Tel: (793) 724 7610.

Mt Dazhang

Dazhang Shan is the dividing range between Poyang Lake and Qiantang River. Dazhang Shan village is at the peak more than 1,000 metres above sea level, there is Zhangshan village and Zhangshan Outer Village. The village views are best from higher vantage points.

Transport: Morning buses leave for the town, at noon buses leave from the town.

Accommodation: Dazhang Shan Resort Village, **Dazhang Shan Xiangshang Village** Tel: (793) 740 4351

At the foot of the mountain — **Wolong Hotel** Add: Chetian Village, Dazhang Shan Tel: (793) 724 6555

Yantian's Old Camphor Trees

A thousand year old camphor tree forms the village centre, ancient water mills and stone grinds are dotted around the Anhui style housing, all part of the picture-perfect classical Chinese village scene — a brook running under a small bridge, families living close by.

Transport: Take shuttle buses from the town.

Accommodation: **Yantian Guzhang Folk Customs Park** Contact Shi Jingfu: 138 7930 4848

Shicheng Village

Situated in Gutan Xiang, to Wuyuan's northwest, this village is made up of Chengcun and Daicun, divided by a natural stone wall. Autumn offers the prettiest views, because of the village's over a hundred tall maples; free admission.

Transport: Served by buses from the town.

Accommodation: Stay with local families

Likeng

This historical village — with well-kept ancient architecture, is so named because it's mainly inhabited by descendants of the Li family. Located about 12 km from Wuyuan town, Anhui style residences on both sides of the river bank make up a classic village view - the rooftop balcony at Guangming teahouse is the best place to take it all in.

Transport: Take the eastbound bus from Wuyuan to Xiaorong, Daban, Gangkou, get off en-route and walk for about one kilometre.

Accommodation:

Chaxiang Guesthouse Tel: (793) 726 2891

Guangming Teahouse Tel: (793) 726 2039

Jiangling

One of Wuyuan's prettiest villages, famous for the scenes of - when the rape flowers are in full bloom, a good vantage point offers a terrific view of the terraced fields and quaint villages; free admission.

Transport: Take the buses from town or Xiaoqi, Jiangling.

Accommodation: **Farmer Guesthouse** Tel: (793) 725 2399

Jiangling Guesthouse Contact Song Yuhai: 135 7631 7376

(by Huang Yanhong)

Huang Yanh

Qingyuan

This boat-shaped village is also called Xiao Taoyuan (small oasis), shortened to Xiaoyuan. You can find it at Duanxin Xiang — to the northeast of Wuyuan County, it was founded at the beginning of the Tang dynasty — over a thousand.

Transport: There are buses to the village from the town, or take a bus from Xiaoqi; free admission.

Accommodation: Staying with **Zhan Yunsheng**, a teacher at Duanxin high school, he can help you find a guide who will take you to the best spots for photos. Add: No. 152, Qingyuan village Tel: (793) 725 6152

Or try the **Fang Chunliang Village Chief Hotel** Add: 234 Qingyuan Ancient Village Tel: (793) 725 6008

Yuanyang Lake

This is the first sight you come across on the way from Jingdezhen is at Fuchun Town, about 40 km away from Wuyuan town, the lake is over 2,300 *mu* (about 1503 hectares) in area. From 1986, there have been more than 2,000 pairs of Yuanyang (mandarin ducks or Chinese lovebirds) flying here every year for winter.

Transport: The Jingdezhen-Wuyuan bus passes Yuanyang Lake, alternatively, take a bus from the town.

Accommodation: There are hotels at the scenic area.

Wangkou

Located at the west of Dongjiawan Town of Wuyuan County, with 18 jetties at the river, 18 streets are connected to the main road, over 95% of the village's residences are preserved from the Ming or Qing dynasties.

Transport: Wangkou is about 23 km from Ziyang Town, served by buses.

Accommodation: Family-run hostels.

Xiaoqi, Huangling Villages

The two villages are only one to two kilometres away from each other, with beautiful paddy fields, especially outside Xiaoqi Vllage, walking about 15 minutes; admission is free.

Transport: Due to poor road conditions, sometimes the shuttle buses don't run.

Accommodation: Stay with local families.

Jujing

On the way to Shicheng, a small river wraps around the village in a stunning curve, climb the hills for a perfect shot of the curving river; free admission.

Transport: Take the bus to Shicheng, tell the driver you need to stop at Jujing.

Accommodation: Stay with local families.

Langshan Bagua Fields

A local scenic spot nearby Caocun, best viewed after the water release. Free admission.

Transport: Not very convenient, take a bus to Duanxin power station, then walk uphill. It's about a two hour walk to Caocun Village.

Accommodation: There is a **Yunsheng Hotel** next to the dam, it's run by Fang Yunsheng, from the Tanli Village, he's very familiar with the local conditions and can guide you to stay at one of the farmer guesthouses on the mountain.

Yaoli

Transport: Yaoli is more than 50 km away from Jingdezhen, about one hour by bus. There are two services per day, leaving in the morning, returning in the afternoon.

Accommodation: There are a few hotels in Yaoli, charging about 15 yuan/ bed. At Meiling Village there is only one hotel, with a tariff of 10 yuan/ bed.

Admission: 98 yuan, can be used at all 5 main scenic areas.

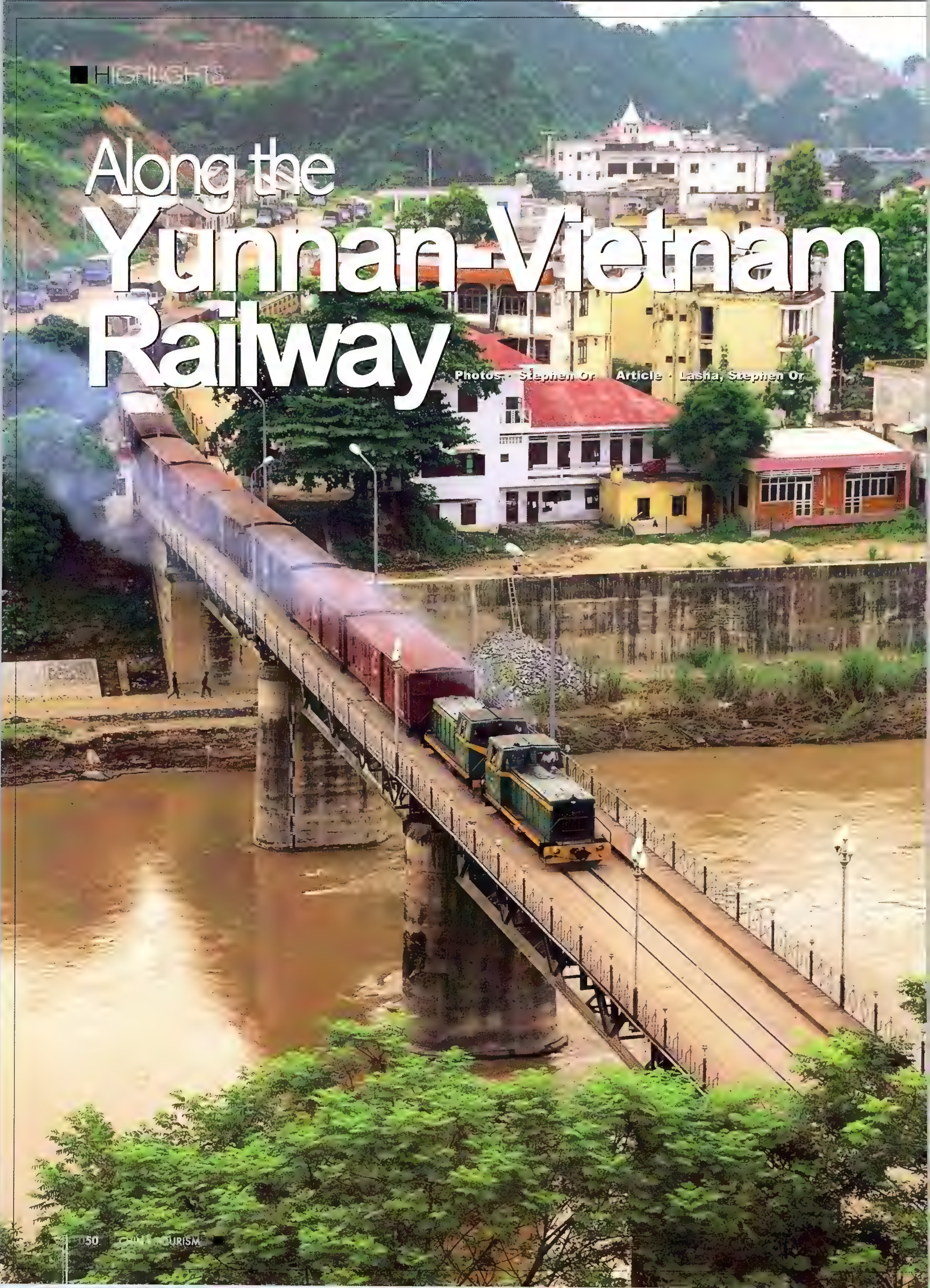
To Watch the 'Taige' Festival

Period: Around the Lunar New Year

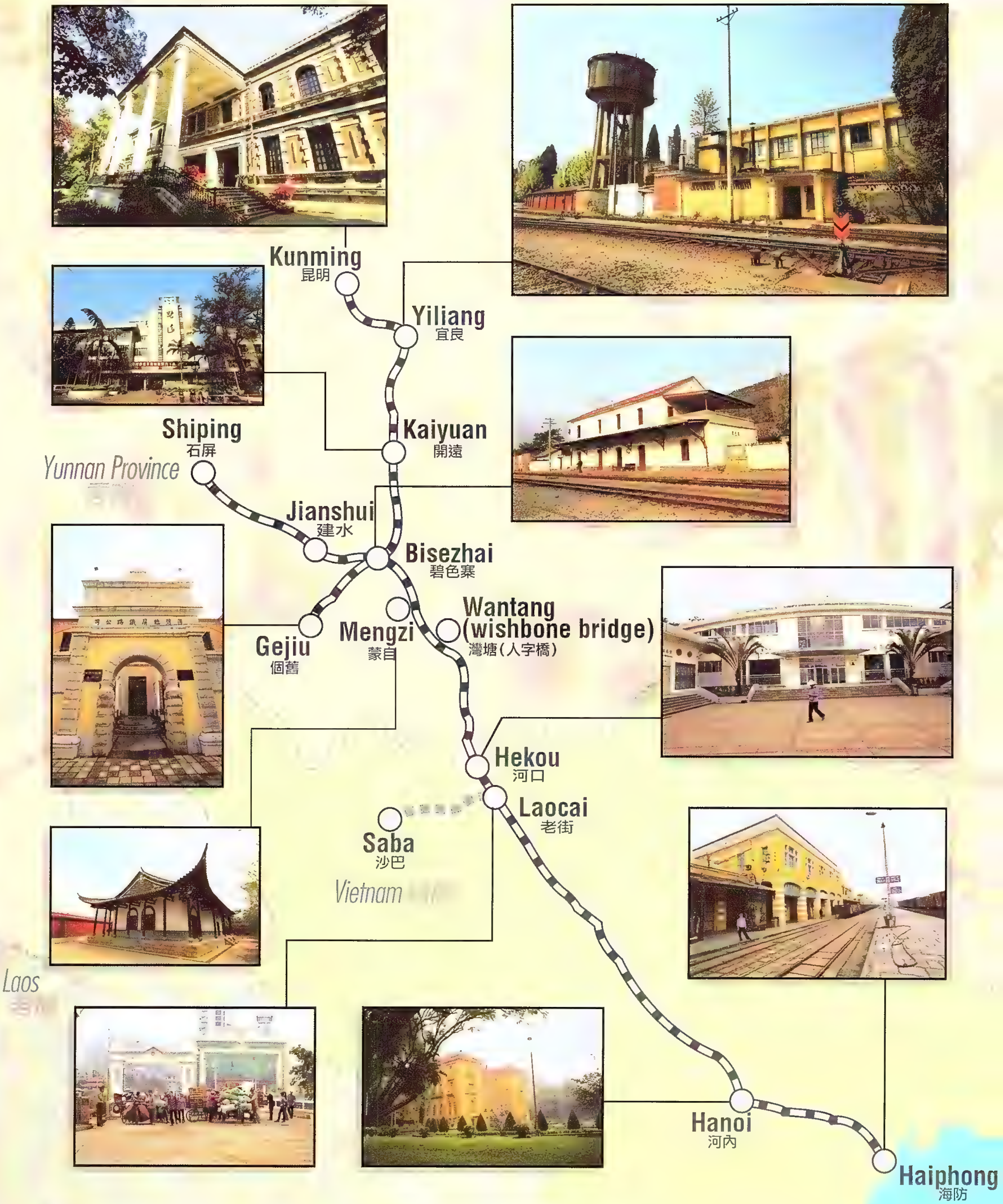
Transport: Take a one-hour shuttle bus from Wuyuan to Jialu Township; or hire a car, of which a return trip costs 200 yuan.

Along the Yunnan-Vietnam Railway

Photos · Stephen Or   Article · Lasha, Stephen Or



A special train once carried passengers out of China, from Yunnan into Vietnam. As it no longer runs, this century-old railway is gradually fading from people's memories, and the railway stations, churches, and bell towers along the route are sinking into oblivion with the passage of time...


Kunming
昆明
Yiliang
宜良
Kaiyuan
開遠
Shiping
石屏
Yunnan Province
Jianshui
建水
Bisezhai
碧色寨
Gejiu
個舊
Mengzi
蒙自
Wantang
(wishbone bridge)
灣塘（人字橋）
Hekou
河口
Laocai
老街
Saba
沙巴
Vietnam
Laos
Hanoi
河內
Haiphong
海防

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時鮮炒菜 生日宴席
中晚餐 各种炒菜、
生日宴席、同学聚会、
欢迎新老顾客
光临惠顾
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1,2. The residential houses by Cuihu Lake, like the Army Academy and the contemporary Yunnan-Vietnam Railway Station, are steeped with French flavour.

3. The abandoned metre-gauge rail lying quietly in a residential area reminds one of the good old days.

The year 2003 was the centennial anniversary of this railway's construction. After a hundred years of ups and downs, the passenger train heading going directly out of the country stopped running. What fate is in store for this exotic railway? Are all those French-style railway stations now deserted? Taking advantage of the New Year holidays, we decided to look for the romance of France along this route to Vietnam.

Kunming – Trains in Quiet Repose

As the starting point of the Yunnan-Vietnam Railway, Kunming Station was the start of our hunt for French romance. In preparation for the World Expo in the 1990s, countless traditional and French architectural treasures had been dismantled and replaced by cloned buildings and reconstructed sights. The French character, which came with the steam locomotives in 1910, also disappeared in a torrent of history, leaving behind only scattered debris in the city's corners.

The South Railway Station, the original starting point, was completely torn down and what remains now is no more than a broken wall and a century-old tree. The 1910 Restaurant nearby, however, has become an excellent detailed reminder of the railway's lost history. Old black-and-white photos of the railway's early days are on display, along with other relics collected by the restaurant owner, in rooms all named after its stations. A few authentic Yunnan dishes, together with a taste of the Yunnan Red – a red wine made from the grapes brought in by early French missionaries would soon send you back into the past.

Visit the Railway Museum at the Kunming North Railway Station to learn more about this railway. This station had replaced the south one as the railway's starting point in the late 1950s. Since the passenger train stopped running in 2005 and there are now only

The Yunnan-Vietnam Railway

One of only a handful of metre-gauge railways in China, the Yunnan-Vietnam Railway was the first one built by the French colonial government according to the terms of an 'unequal treaty' Starting at Haiphong in Vietnam, then a French colony, the Vietnamese section of the railway crosses the Chinese-Vietnamese border near Laocai and then the Yunnan section (called the Dian, the historic name of Yunnan) runs from Hekou northward to Kunming. Construction began in 1901 during Qing Emperor Guangxu's reign. Two years later the French government approved the plan to build the eastern section, with work beginning in 1903. On 15 April, 1909, the train reached Bisezhai Village but the entire railway only became fully functional in the following year on 1 April.

two freight trains pulling out everyday, there's plenty of empty space for the Railway Museum exhibitions. The rail carriages that formerly ran along the metre-gauge and 60 cm narrow gauge rails now lie undisturbed by sporadic visitors; for them, it is just a change of role - from rambling thousands of miles to reposing in the museum.

Yiliang – A Station Transcending Time and Space

It was noon when we arrived at the Yiliang Railway Station, the second stop on the line. The French-style building at this station, the only Yunnan-Vietnam Railway station where passenger trains still stop, is fairly intact.

Rows of long green benches, a century-old water

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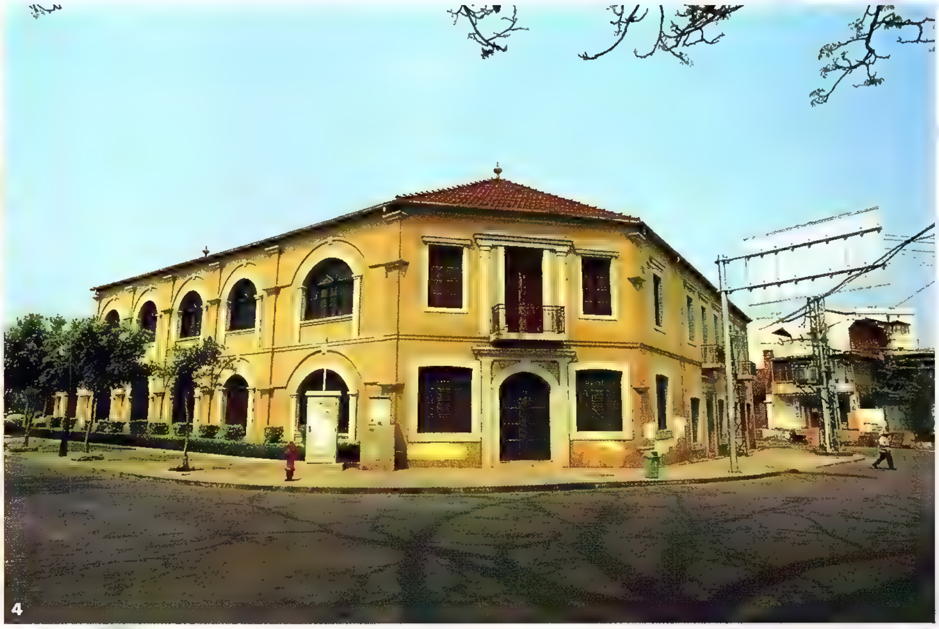
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tower in the background, and iron railway carriages would make ideal props for a nostalgia film. A couple of locomotives of the 'cultural revolution' period (1966–1976) lay here and there, with the three characters Dong Fang Hong (東方紅 'the East is red') written in the late Chairman Mao Zedong's calligraphy.

Guided by the station staff, we crossed the railway to the former French staff office building. This three-storey house is in French style, with classic yellow walls, green fan windows, and ceramic floor tiles. Standing elegantly on its own, it resembles an old yellow rose in a vase proudly showing its past splendour.

I looked around for the station's turntable of 11 sets of rails that I had seen in a stunning 1930s photo at the entrance of the 1910 Restaurant in Kunming. A kind-hearted station worker led us to a white building where we saw about 10 metres of rail laying there, but it seemed that the old rotary had now been replaced by a fountain! Only a small section of those original rails, radiating outwards like rays of the sun, remained to satisfy interested visitors like us.

Century-old rails, trains of the 'cultural revolution', and modern passengers... here time and space seem to meet and cross one another, stirring my imagination. In my previous life, had I been a passenger on this line?

Kaiyuan – Resting Place for Foreign Souls

Located midway on the Yunnan-Vietnam Railway, Kaiyuan was the supply centre, including medical resources, when the railway was under construction. Among the French buildings around the railway station, there were a few clinics and wards of that period. Even foreigners working on the railway who needed medical treatment would come here for help. Due to limited resources, however, the mortality rate was rather high, as can be seen from the foreigners' tombstones at the Jiefang Fertilizer Plant in Kaiyuan's suburbs. Few people besides some elderly locals and plant staff know much about the venerated history of these tombs. The full story seems to have faded into thin air.

We couldn't find the tombs at first. After asking around, an old man told us that 'there used to be some 500 tombs around here; some belonged to Westerners and Vietnamese but most were Chinese workers.' Following him, we came to a house whose owner was planting vegetables. Pointing to the other end of the vegetable plot, the old man said that the only remaining tombs lay over there. Some words, such as the name of a French lady, Mare Louise, are still legible on the tombstones that lie in peace on the ground. Although there is no clue as to where she came from or why she came, her destiny is forever tied up with Kaiyuan.

Mengzi – Mr. Wen's Residence in a Hotel

As our shuttle bus drove slowly from the new part of Mengzi into the old town, a sharp contrast split the two different worlds. The neat orderly layout, the wide asphalt roads, and the super spacious new bus terminal of the new town made me feel like I was in a newly developed coastal area with a machine-produced modern look. Most houses in the old town have been torn down, with some remains adapted as a market selling all manner of cheap goods. Only the dimly-distinguishable features of the Xi'antang and Pingxiangguan, two famed old businesses, and the big stone well down the centre of the street, still tell the tales of the old town.

1. Generations of railway workers built up the Yunnan-Vietnam Railway's good reputation over time.

2. Though the owners have long gone, Yiliang's old staff office building belies its French style with ceramic floor tiles, louvered doors and sash windows.

3. A tombstone indicates the resting place of MARE LOUISE.

4. A Greek company once occupied this fine example of French architecture. It later served as the scholar-writer Wen Yiduo's residence and was dubbed 'Why Not Come Downstairs'.

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At that time many Westerners travelling along the Yunnan-Vietnam Railway enjoyed staying at Mengzi. They frequented the places around the Nanhu Lake, just as people do in Lijiang and Dali nowadays. So the town was packed with row upon row of shops, hotels, Western restaurants and bars. With buildings in French, Italian and Spanish styles standing side by side, Mengzi resembles a small European town.

A former hotel by the lake stands witness to this period. Built in 1905, its Greek owners kept the French architectural style that included painted ceramic floor tiles, Baroque style wall lamps and a fireplace during their remodelling. In an effort to keep up the original flavour of the time, the present owner named the rooms after the companies and banks most popular during that period.

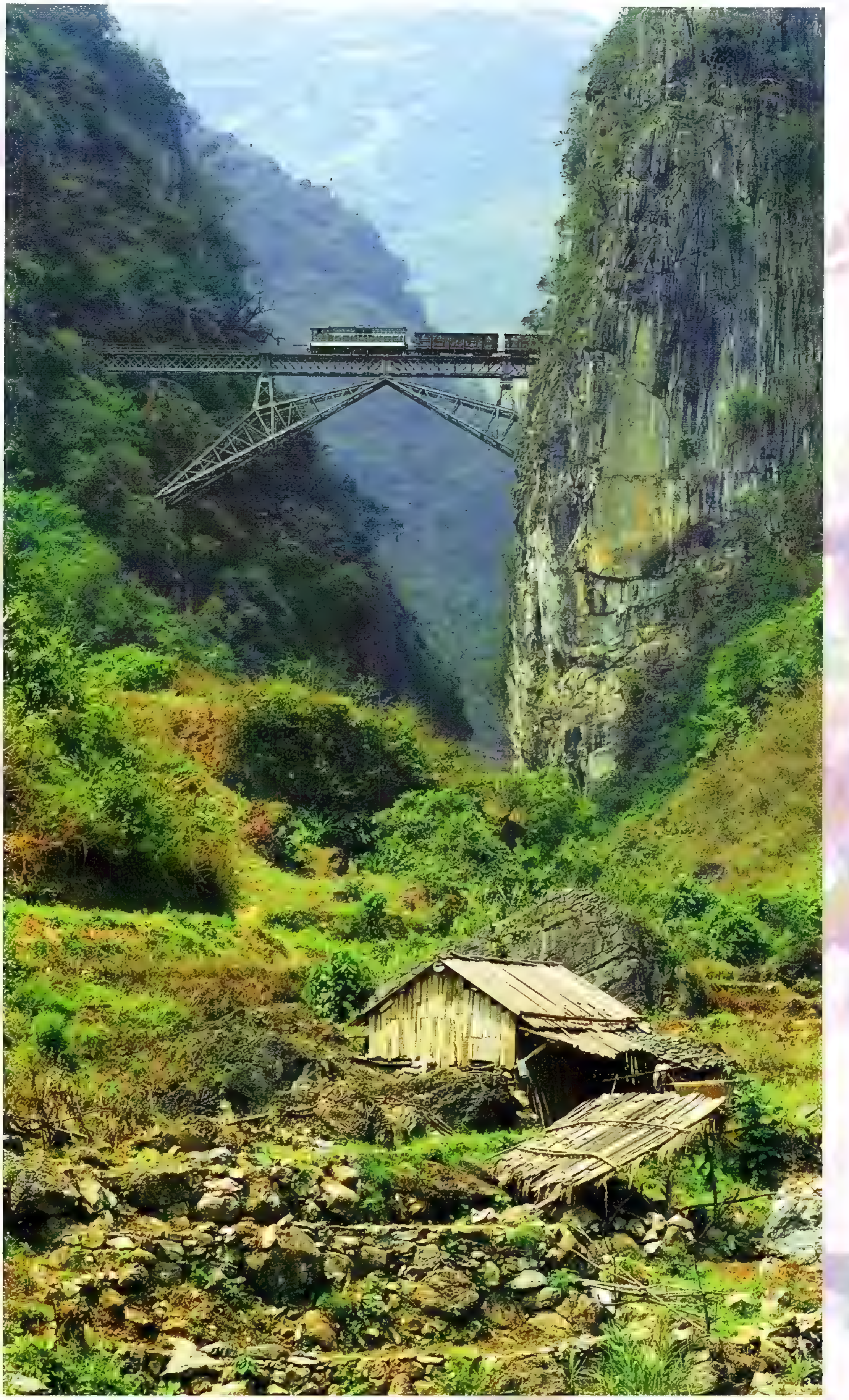
Exhibits about Mr. Wen Yiduo, a famous writer and scholar, and a branch of the South-West Associated University, are on the second floor. During the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, Mr. Wen went to Yunnan and taught at the College of Humanities and Law. He lived in a 14-square-metre room in this hotel. Immersed in his research, he seldom went downstairs. His neighbour, Professor Zheng Tianting, asked him, 'Why not come downstairs?' Later his dorm was dubbed 'Why Not Come Downstairs' and it became a much-recounted tale.

Going downstairs, we met a group of French tourists, who marvelled at the architecture. They had come from Vietnam, tracing the footprints of their forefathers and were most impressed by Mengzi. A man in his 50s said that his grandfather was right – Mengzi is a wonderful 'home away from home.'

Bisezhai – Once Shining with Prosperity

Bisezhai (Green Village) is a name that evokes the imagination. There are so many places endowed with clear lakes and green woods in Yunnan, yet only Bisezhai could stand out enough to name itself 'green'. This originally quiet village in Caoba Township, 12 km from Mengzi, was changed forever by the arrival of a giant galloping iron horse a hundred years ago, bringing in droves of foreigners, along with their beer, cigars, coffee and perfume. While building many tall and gorgeous houses, these foreigners also moved carriages full of tin and aluminium out of the area. How scared, curious or excited the villagers there were, we don't know, but they soon adjusted and began to share the spoils.

Located at the meeting point of the Yunnan-Vietnam and Bisezhai-Gejiu-Shiping railway lines, Bisezhai became a station where all trains stopped. This meant that a large number of foreign firms, shops, restaurants, ballrooms and warehouses sprang up in the small village – a super busy station receiving over 30 trains a day and endless goods coming and



1. The empty Bisezhai Station looks bleak now that the passenger trains have ceased to operate.

2. A Yao ethnic group fair at Wantang, featuring smoking stalls as well as sales of daily goods.

3. A fully loaded freight train thundering over the wishbone bridge.

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going. At dusk with the village lights on, Bisezhai resembles a lively small town in southern France. The top-grade, old French platform still stands beside the railway. We found the legendary sign noting the convergence of the Tropic of Cancer and the Yunnan-Vietnam Railway on the platform, carved by French staff in front of the station office decades ago. It helped us transcend time and space to meet an imaginary passenger of years gone by. The immobile French clock on the platform seemed to make time stand still at a time shining with prosperity.

Pingbian – A Proud Steel Giant

The only Miao autonomous county in Yunnan, Pingbian sits among the mountains with the Yao and Dai ethnic groups in Jinping and the Yao in Hekou as neighbours. The drive from Mengzi to Pingbian followed a narrow zigzagging mountain road amid terraced land, testing the psychological and physical limits of the driver and passengers alike. The unusual wishbone bridge (shaped like the Chinese character for man – 人) has brought Pingbian fame worldwide, with many foreign scholars and tourists coming to see it. As renowned as the Eiffel Tower and Panama Canal for its architecture, this remarkable bridge has stood strong in China's forested southwest for a century without a single screw having to be replaced!

Despite its remote location and long distance, and few other travellers, we rented a car and passed through Baizhai, then onto a rough rocky road to Wantang Township. Our terrible bumpy drive was relieved by a colourful festive scene that suddenly appeared down in the valley. We were lucky, the driver said, as this was Wantang's market fair, when nearby villagers would come in about every six days for shopping and revelry. Sure enough, the fair was spread out on a small area of flat land at the bottom of a small hill, with all kinds of stalls selling tobacco, snacks, printed cloth, toys, stationery, and even domestic animals. The cloth, belts and accessories were the most popular items. Nowadays only wedding gowns are hand-made; most of the fabrics used by the ethnic minorities for daily clothes are machine-made and garments sewn at home.

We continued on to the wishbone bridge, eagerly anticipating a view of a train on the bridge between two mountains. Through many twists and turns on this one lane route we came to a broken down car that prevented us from driving the remaining six kilometres to the bridge. We had to walk, experiencing one ten-thousandth of the road-builders' hardship.

Two kilometres into our walk, a group of teenagers on motorbikes offered us a lift. How lucky we were! My driver, on a fast attractive motorbike, sped along this rough pitted road through little pools of water formed by last night's rain. He lost control in one of the pools and the motorbike flipped over. A test of our sincerity perhaps, but we were determined, and despite my bandaged bleeding hands and being covered in mud, we set off again.

We still had to walk one kilometre into the Nanxi Valley to reach the wishbone bridge. Carrying three cameras in a backpack, I walked clumsily, falling on the stony shoals of the rivulet like a drowning mouse. Yet, compared with those who risked their lives to build this bridge a century ago, my grazed hands and fatigue were minor problems. Looking up from the valley, the legendary bridge stands upright like a steel giant supported by the strong arms of the cliffs. We drew a deep breath as we heard the thundering sounds of the train approaching. As the locomotive pulled its many carriages from the tunnel onto the bridge, we silently pressed the shutters and recorded this moment in history.

Hekou – Romantic Vietnamese Street

We arrived in Hekou at nightfall. This is where the Red River, after coursing its way through Yunnan,

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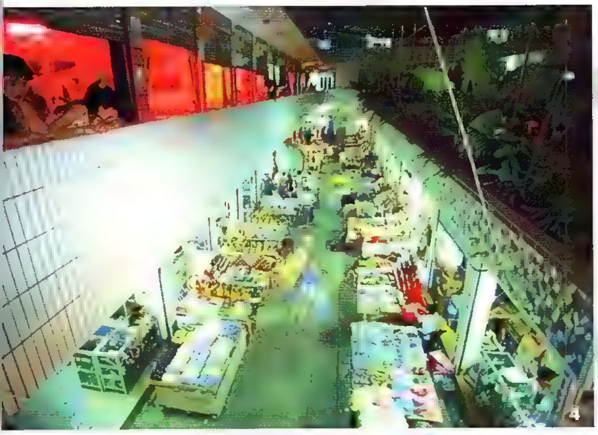
begins its new journey in Vietnam. Impossible to tell if the river was truly red in the darkness, we decided to finish our day with a good night's rest to combat our fatigue. We arose early to watch the raising of the National Flag at the border gate and the daily influx of the shrewd Vietnamese women hawkers. These slim women in typical hats crossed the busy border early to market their goods on the Vietnamese Street, returning in the afternoon loaded down with goods to sell back home.

In the back streets there are other ground and second floor shops selling a rich variety of Vietnamese specialities and daily necessities. Deeper into the alleys are shops with sensually suggestive signs. Curious, we watched the scantily clad pretty girls hanging around, some playing mah-jong, some applying make-up and others chatting. They took no interest in us but we knew that they were just waiting for the right customer to come along.



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Laocai – The First Taste of Vietnamese Iced Coffee

After going through the formalities at the Friendship Bridge, we finally stepped on the soil of Vietnam. We felt it a pity to enter this way rather than on an international train across the railway bridge, so to compensate we visited the railway station in Laocai - the Vietnamese city neighbouring China's Hekou. Extending along the Red River, Laocai is a small city. It took about 15 to 20 minutes to walk from the border to the railway station. A mixture of farm products and daily goods are sold at the open market square in front of the station, though few vendors had set up in the early hours of the day that we were there. We spoke with a motorbike driver there about places to visit and he suddenly looked at his watch and suggested we go into the station. As we did, a loud whistle

1. A view of the Chinese border gate from the Vietnamese side.

2. A view of the city of Laocai.

3. Chinese policemen check incoming foreign tourists. Hekou was once the only border port in Yunnan. (by Chan Yat Nin)

4. The vibrant Vietnamese Street. (by Chan Yat Nin)

DỪNG LẠI
STOP

1. During the market fair times, the freight train from Haiphong to Laocai sometimes also carries passengers.

2. The rails on the China-Vietnam Railway Bridge are two different types: the standard-gauge and the metre-gauge.

3. Every Sunday, many of the ethnic minorities of Vietnam sell their souvenirs near the church in the Lovers' Square.

4. The St. Joseph Cathedral in Hanoi – one of Vietnam's two great cathedrals.

announced the arrival of a freight train from Haiphong to Kunming. Quickly the Vietnamese men and women poured out of the carriages, carrying chickens and ducks in cages, or shoulder poles loaded with pineapples and vegetables. They all hurried out to find the best spot for good business in the market square.

A small stall in the square selling a very special drink – Vietnamese drip coffee. The ground coffee goes into a special iron container placed on top of a mug and with the addition of some water, the aromatic coffee slowly drips down into the mug. Milk, if requested, goes into the mug before the drip starts. If it is to be iced, a hand-pressed ball of ice cut from a huge block, is added to the glass just before it is served.

Wondering if we were risking our health, we ordered two cups of iced coffee. With my first mouthful, it felt like love at first sight. From that point on, we knew we couldn't go without this marvellous coffee all the time we were in Vietnam.

Saba – A Small Romantic Lovers' Town

We came a step closer to our goal of taking the Yunnan-Vietnam Railway after securing train tickets from Laocai to Hanoi. Unexpectedly, at the station I saw a postcard of a stunning small European town half hidden in the mist. Its yellow wall and red tiles were bathed in the morning light, as if in a fairyland. Was it in Vietnam? No, the postcard stated: Saba – Laocai!

We exchanged our tickets for the following day at once and hopped on a minibus heading for Saba. The mist rose with the temperature and roamed among the mountains. As our bus drove upward along the mountain road the mist became heavier, turning our view into pure haze and stimulating disappointment. Getting off the bus, a wall of cool air embraced me immediately. Within the heavy mist I could just make out the numerous three- and five-storey Western-style buildings covering the hill. Lit by delicate green lamps, the street nearby reminded me of London in Charles Dickens' time.

In the late 19th Century the French discovered this remote peaceful site and started building summer resorts here. Before the French withdrew from the country, the Vietnamese were forbidden to live in Saba. Most of the residents here now came as the French left, moving into the native area of the Black Muong. Every house in Saba has its own features while sharing a typical European style – special contours with bright colours. The uniqueness of this place, ringed by mountains and European in appearance, would surely capture the hearts of its visitors.

As the mist dispersed bit by bit, the tall steeple of the Lovers' Church in the town square gradually took shape. Built a century ago by the hard work of two missionaries, this simple grey brick church rings its bell morning, noon and evening every day. Open to visitors every evening, worshippers pray and sing psalms on their own, as there is no priest in residence. Quite a few local Heimeng and Hongtou (Red-Headed) Yao ethnic group to this church.

In addition to Vietnamese (Gin) ethnic group, there are five other ethnic minorities – the Miao, Yao, Zhuang, Han and Dai – in Saba. They live in the villages near the town, and these days their mountain and forest habitat has become a hot tourist destination. Hikes of half a day to two days to the villages can be arranged. The children of many Saba families have gone to Hanoi for training in various languages and returned to become local guides and interpreters for the large number of tourists now coming to Saba. Our guide Hung, though only a girl of 12, could speak fluent English. Though exceptionally tactful in her work, she appeared to be rather naive. She told us that she had a boyfriend in Denmark, and her 16-year-old sister was going to marry her boyfriend in the UK. When we asked her what 'love' is, she replied haughtily, 'Who knows! Who cares?'

As the singing and music of the Heimeng and Hongtou Yao wafted out from the square, I wondered if the legendary 'weekend love market' had started again. Was there romance in the air? Perhaps it was all just a wistful dream.

Hanoi – Former Annam Government House

Finally, we had the chance to travel on the train on our route to Hanoi. Packed with foreigners returning from Saba, this express train is similar to a Chinese 'K' train and took us 11 hours to reach Hanoi. It was more comfortable than we imagined, quite different from the narrow-gauge small trains of days gone by.

Despite the noisy rumbling train, I slept soundly going along this century-old railway. As we approached Hanoi's suburbs at 6 a.m., the scenery filed by in the fine drizzle like a nostalgic film. Uniquely styled churches, constructed during colonial times, dot the countryside. There are two great cathedrals in Vietnam, the Red Cathedral in Saigon and the one we visited here in Hanoi, not far from the Hoan Kiem Lake – the St. Joseph Cathedral. Though built in Gothic style, with two five-storey towers, the cathedral seems to be missing the typical steeple of this style. It is said that the steeple was dismantled during the War of Independence. Its recessed, tall 'missile-like' windows draw your eyes upwards, creating the impression that the church is taller than its reality. Since it was outside of normal church service times, we entered by the side gate into the dimly lit church. The faint fragrance of the fresh lilies on the altar filled the air. A sculpture of the Holy Father and Son sits behind the altar. Suddenly the sun pierced through the stained glass windows, capturing an exotic painting in its gleaming light. As the brilliance dimmed we could see the Bible figures and stories on the walls.

Having been the seat of the Annam Government during the French colonial period Hanoi would be expected to have French-style buildings around the city dating back to that period. Among the many that remain, the now Presidential Palace, or former Annam Government House, is the most impressive. Unfortunately, it is not open to the public. The French style National Opera House in Hanoi is also a

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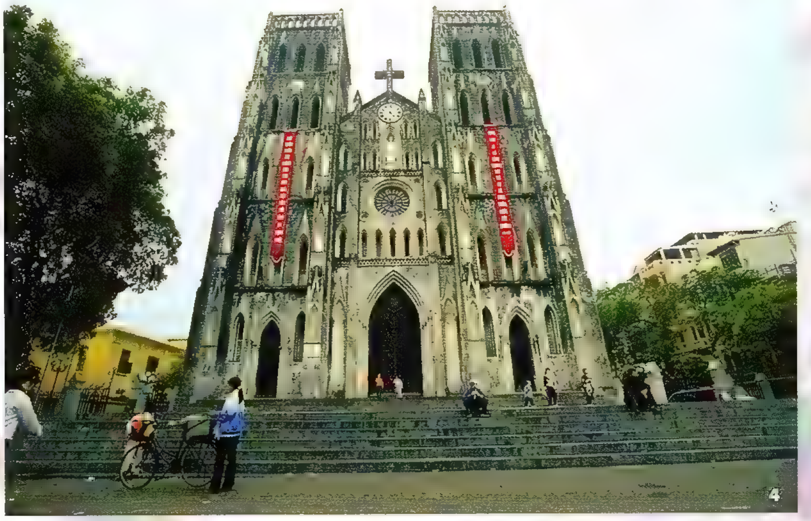
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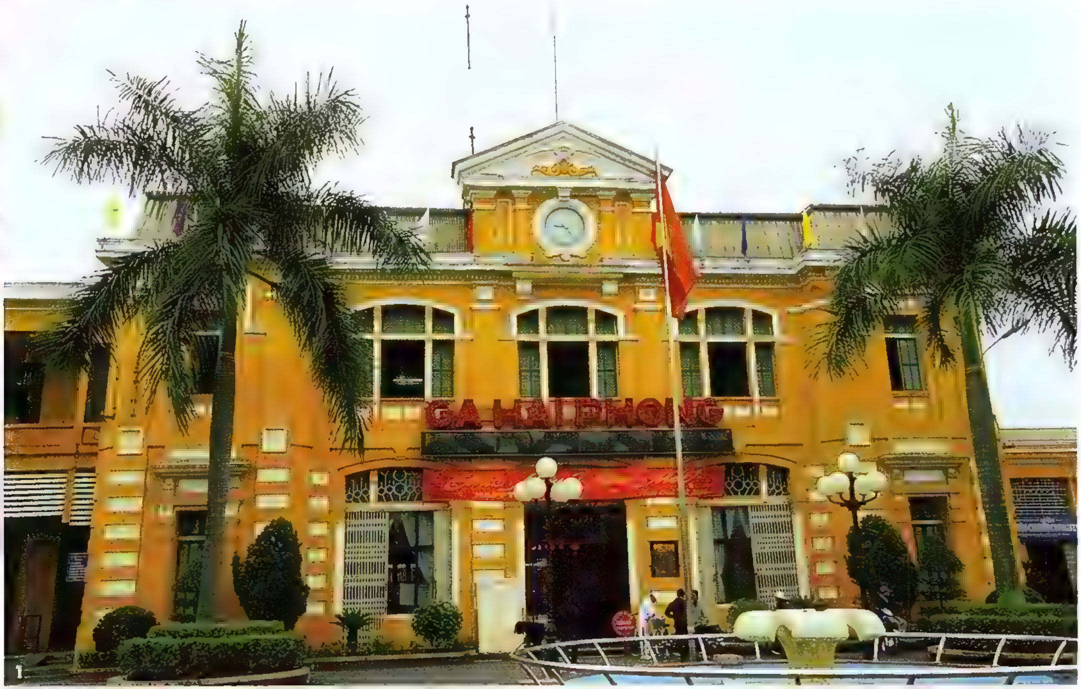

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landmark building. Built in 1909, it experienced the baptism of war, yet still looks stately and graceful. Its yellow and white outer wall, Roman style gateposts, charming and delicate windows, spiral balustrade and bright glazed tiles, all effuse noble pride. The opera house is only open for performances of the national-level troupe. Tickets for the 700 seats are usually fully booked long before the date of the performances.

Those who haven't had the chance to enjoy a performance here still come to revel in its architectural beauty. On weekends, the opera house and nearby Hilton Hotel are frequently used as a backdrop for wedding photos.

In the eyes of many, northern Vietnam is not as beautiful as its southern counterpart where flowers bloom year round. But if you walk around the lanes in Hanoi, you will find flowers everywhere. While the Thais sell flowers in their small boats on the river, the Vietnamese do it from their shoulder poles – two full basketfuls of flowers can change hands in a couple of hours. The most popular is the small 'flower ball' dahlia, which is a bound bunch of short stem cut flowers.

Haiphong – A Romantic Terminal or Beginning?

Our search for the perfect finish to the French-style romance along the Yunnan-Vietnam Railway came to an end in Haiphong. It is not a city used to tourists and few people speak English. We could not find a map in English either so it took us some time to find the Haiphong Railway Station.

We had plenty of wonderful surprises on our journey, and the roadside bread stall is one of them. Bread is daily food to the Vietnamese, though the famous French style bread has been adapted to a more local style. The loaf is broken in half and filled with various local meats. The most common filling is preserved meat or seasoned pork with onion, cucumber, shredded eggs, fish sauce and each family's own special sauce. Though simple, it is super tasty! Together with a cup of Vietnamese iced coffee, it is unbeatable.

Romance can sometimes be as simple as taking a walk on a quiet, tidy street flanked by 100-year-old courtyards, long-established companies and an imposing museum with birds singing in the tall Chinese parasol trees... In Haiphong it is as easy as going into one's own backyard garden.

Our leisurely walk took us to the Haiphong Navy Academy and the Naval Museum. Since the guard at the gate knew very little English, we had to communicate by sign language. He indicated the entrance and that we should not take any photographs. We surreptitiously took photos but, had we seen the guard's AK-47 beforehand we may have followed orders. Like other government buildings in the city, there was a picture of late Chairman Ho Chi Minh hanging in the main building and a red national flag billowing in the air.

We finally strolled up to the Haiphong Railway Station and appreciated its bright yellow exterior, a preference of both the French and the Vietnamese, and green fan windows. Although not as graceful as the buildings in Yiliang and Bisezhai, the station here is more spacious and completely preserved. This 100-metre long platform, with its two-storey waiting rooms is a grand end for the 854 km Yunnan-Vietnam Railway. In fact, the freight train runs further along to the seaside and stops by the wharf so that the cargo can be loaded directly onto the steamboats anchored there. It is a military wharf, so our trace of this famous railway had to end at this station rather than the true end of the line. Whether one heads to, or starts from Haiphong, it will be a journey with French romance on the side.

Translated by L. Yu

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1. The Haiphong Railway Station evokes strong memories of past French colonial times.

2. A Vietnamese woman uses shoulder poles to sell flowers.

3. A delivery of French bread early in the morning.

Itinerary of the Yunnan-Vietnam Railway Tour

Day 1: To Kunming

First visit the Kunming North Railway Station to learn the history of the Yunnan-Vietnam Railway; then go to see the French buildings around the Cuihu Park; have dinner at the 1910 Restaurant, which has nostalgic train and railway displays. Stay overnight in Kunming.

Day 2: Kunming – Yiliang – Kaiyuan – Mengzi

Take a bus from Kunming to Yiliang to visit the Yiliang Railway Station. Have the Yiliang Roast Duck for lunch, and go to Kaiyuan to visit the Foreigners' Tombs in the Jiefang Fertilizer Plant and the French Hospital near the Railway Station. Leave Kaiyuan for Mengzi in the afternoon. Stay in Mengzi.

Day 3: Mengzi – Bisezhai – Mengzi

After a breakfast of Mengzi rice noodles, tour around Nanhu Lake to visit the Customs House and the former Greek hotel. Rent a car to Bisezhai to see the Railway Station at the junction of the Yunnan-Vietnam and Bisezhai-Gejiu-Shiping lines. Return to Mengzi for the night.

Day 4: Mengzi – Pingbian – Wishbone Bridge – Pingbian

Take a shuttle bus to Pingbian, then rent a car to the Wishbone Bridge (six hours for the return trip). On certain days, you might meet ethnic minorities at the fair. Stay in Pingbian.

Day 5: Piangbian – Hekou

Drive from Pingbian to Hekou, to visit the China-Vietnam Railway Bridge, Vietnamese Street, the site of the former Hekou Customs House. Stay in Hekou.

Day 6: Hekou – Laocai

After watching the national flag raising ceremony at Hekou, cross the border to Laocai in Vietnam. Sightseeing in Laocai in the afternoon: the Laocai Church, Laocai Railway Station, China-Vietnam border gate, the Railway Bridge. Stay in Laocai.

Day 7: Laocai – Saba

Take the train from Laocai Railway Station to Saba, to visit the Lovers' Church and the bazaar. Stay in Saba.

Day 8: Saba – Laocai – Hanoi

Go trekking to the Catcat and Hongtou Yao villages of ethnic minorities near Saba. Return to Laocai in the afternoon. Take an evening sleeper train to Hanoi.

Day 9: Hanoi

Visit the historic sites of the French colonial period: the French architecture in the old town around the Hoan Kiem Lake, the History Museum, Presidential Palace (former Annam Government House), St. Joseph Cathedral, and National Opera House. Stay in Hanoi.

Day 10: Hanoi – Haiphong

Arriving in Haiphong from Hanoi, visit the Haiphong Railway Station, the seafood market, Haiphong Museum, and the Post Office. Stay in Haiphong.

Day 11: Haiphong - Hanoi

After arriving back in Hanoi, you may stay another day or leave by air.

Yunnan

Transport

Kunming: There are many flights between Kunming and other cities in China.

Kaiyuan: Every hour trains go to Mengzi from its South Railway Station, and to Kunming from the North Railway Station.

Bisezhai: The 12 km minibus ride from Mengzi North Bus Terminal to Caoba costs three yuan.

Pingbian Wishbone Bridge: Car rental costs about 180 ~ 250 yuan for the six-hour round-trip.

Hekou: Buses for Mengzi and Kunming start out from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. from the bus terminal close to the border gate.

Accommodation

Kunming: The Hump Hostel, Jinbi Square, Jinbi Road; Tel. (871) 364 0359; 100 yuan for a standard room

Kaiyuan: Yin Tong Hotel, Jianmin Road; Tel: (873) 712 1373, 713 4580

Mengzi: Junshan Hotel, Mengzi County Town; Tel: (873) 364 6081

Pingbian: Pingbian Hotel, the best hotel in Pingbian County Town; 100 ~ 150 yuan for a standard room

Hekou: Xingguang Grand Hotel, 17 Zhongduan (midway) of Binhe Road;
Tel. (873) 342 6999

Dining

Kunming: 1910 Restaurant at the South Railway Station, Houxin Street, southern Kunming; Tel: (871) 316 9486

Yiliang: 10~15 yuan for a roast duck, sold at stores in Changjie Street and Fenfangyuan Restaurant, and roadside snacks

Mengzi: Eel rice noodles, 5 Maizixiang, Renmin Zhonglu (Street)

Hekou: Feijie Snack Shop, with good taste and fair business, 10~15 yuan a person for average

Sites of interest:

Kunming

Out-patient Department of the Renmin Hospital; Huize Building of Yunnan University; Master Lu's Mansion (4 Cuihu South Road); Yunnan Railway Museum (Beijing Road)

Yiliang: The Old Railway Station, the century-old Water Tower, French Office Building

Kaiyuan: Foreigners' Tombs, Kaiyuan Railway Station, and Renmin Hospital (formerly French Hospital)

Bisezhai: French architecture of the Bisezhai Railway Station, a former Greek Hotel, Water Tower

Mengzi: A Greek Hotel, Former Residence of Mr. Wen Yiduo (writer, scholar), Mengzi Customs House and Telegram Office

Hekou: China-Vietnam Railway Bridge, Vietnamese Street, the site of the former Customs House

Vietnam

Climate: In winter the weather in Hanoi is similar to, if not a few degrees hotter than that in Hong Kong. In areas of northern Vietnam such as Saba and Laocai, and the Red River Prefecture area in Yunnan, it may be cooler and warm clothes are recommended.

Laocai

Dining: There are many restaurants and snack bars around the square at the railway station, where you can store your luggage.

Places of interest: Laocai Church, Laocai Railway Station, China-Vietnam Border Gate, the Railway Bridge.

Saba

Transport: It takes an hour to cover the 38 km from Laocai to Saba. Shuttle buses leave when full from the Laocai Railway Station Square and Saba Square.

Accommodation: Royal Hotel; Tel. (84 - 2) 87, 1313

Places of interest: Lovers' Church, Saba bazaar, trek to Catcat and Red Dzao villages.

Hanoi

Transport: About one Hong Kong dollar per km for a tricycle ride. Agree on the price before you ride. The starting fare for a taxi is VND12,000 (about $6) and increases by VND1,000 (about $0.5) at intervals.

1. Flight: Direct flights to Hanoi are available from the Chinese cities of Beijing,Guangzhou, Kunming, Nanning, Hong Kong and Taipei. Vietnam Airlines: Address in Hanoi: 25,Trang Thi St.; Tel: (84 - 4) 936, 0048. Website: www.vietnamairlines.com.vn/
   China Southern Airlines: Address in Hanoi: 360, Kim Ma St. Daeha Business Centre; Tel: (84-4) 771, 6616. Website: http://www.cs-air.com/cn/index.asp

2. Railway: Trains run directly from Hanoi to northern cities of Laocai (neighbouring Hekou in Yunnan, China) and Haiphong.
   Vietnam National Railway website: http://www.vr.com.vn/English/index.html

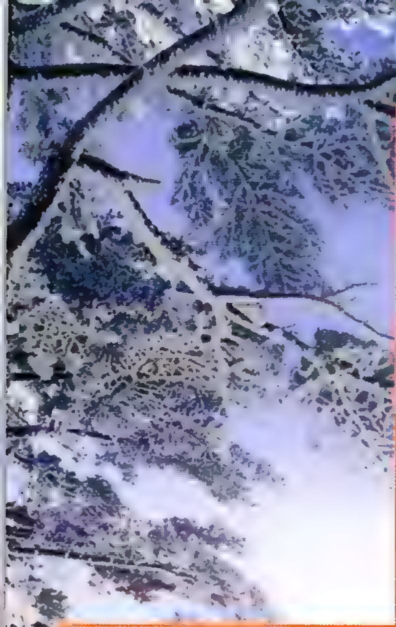
3. To buy an open bus ticket in Hanoi, the Sinh Cafe or An Phu Tourist are the safest places.
   Accommodation: There are many hotels scattered in the old town area (also known as All-trade Streets) north of the Hoan Kiem Lake, with prices between $4 ~ 20/room.
   Dining: Delicious an d crispy French bread, meatball soup, Vietnamese beef noodles, coffee, fruit shake.
   Places of interest: French buildings in the old town area around Hoan Kiem Lake, the Presidential Palace (former Annam Government House), St. Joseph Cathedral, National Opera House.

Haiphong

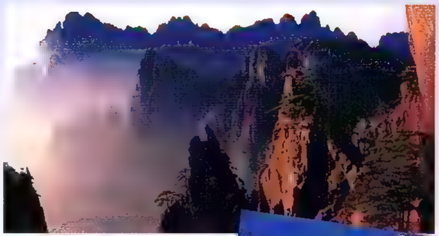
Transport: Shuttle buses run every 10 minutes for the two-hour ride to Hanoi, charging VND25, 000 (about 13 yuan) per person. The terminus in Hanoi is Kim Ma Stop or Gia Lam Stop.

Accommodation: Hotels in Haiphong are mostly found in Punguyen Duc Canh Avenue. Many are renovated old Western-style houses, charging US$15 ~ 20 for a standard room.

Places of interest: Haiphong Railway Station, sea-food market, Haiphong Museum, Haiphong Post Office.



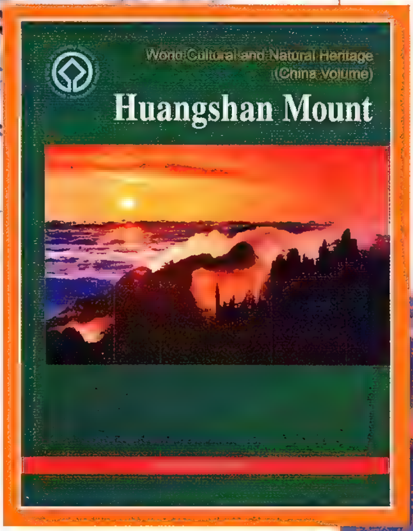
Mt. Huangshan, situated in the south of Anhui Province, is one of the most famous scenic areas in China. Being put into the World Heritage List, it is also granted with two laurels of cultural heritage and natural heritage by the UNESCO's World Heritage Commission.



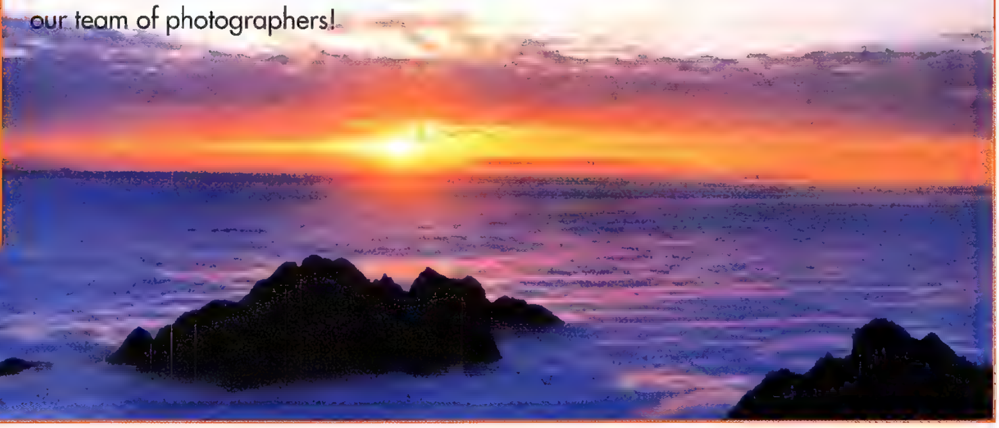
The landscape of the mountain is a typical granite hoodoo landform shaped during the long geological periods by several tectonic movements in the crust. Mt. Huangshan has long been famous for its strange-looking pine trees, grotesque rocks, sea of clouds and hot springs.

All over one thousand metres above sea level, there are 77 peaks in the scenic area of almost two hundred square kilometres. Granite rock forests and rock columns together with massive rocks scatter everywhere. Moreover, Mt. Huangshan is a diverse ecosystem with a treasure of wildlife. There are approximately 1450 species of plants, 300 species of vertebrates and 170 species of birds.

Combined unique scenery and magnificent sea of clouds, the beauty of Mt. Huangshan has continued to fascinate endless visitors. Catch a glimpse of its glory in this "Huangshan Mount" pictorial that is filled with breath-taking images taken by our team of photographers!



World Cultural and Natural Heritage
(China Volume)
Huangshan Mount



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Around Guilin

Photos & Article · Mickey Ching

Guilin and surrounding areas boast many interesting places. You can get a close look at a Giant Panda, stay at the artistic HoMA (Hotel of Modern Art), watch the breathtaking horse fight of the Miao minority and enjoy the grand Village Banquet of the Dong people.

Seven Star Park

Tastes of Hong Kong

The beautiful name of the Seven Star Park comes from the seven peaks inside; four of Mt Putuo and three of Mt Yueya which together make up 'The Big Dipper' on earth. Seven Star Park is the largest theme park in Guilin. The most popular scenic spots in the city are the Flowery Bridge built in the Jiaxi reign period (1237—1240) of the Southern Song Dynasty (1127—1279) and the oldest bridge in town, Camel Hill which is also the site of speech on environmental protection delivered by former US President Bill Clinton, the marvellous Seven Star Limestone Cave and the hundreds of stone steles in the Longyin Cave.

Lovely Giant Panda

When in the Seven Star Park don't miss 12-year-old Yue Yue, the second giant panda to reside here. The first was Mei Mei who passed away at the age of 36. Yueyue is the daughter of An An and Jia Jia, who now live in Hong Kong. Yue Yue likes to have a sunbath in the afternoon when you can take a photo of her. It's really worthwhile as it saves you the time and energy of travelling all the way to Sichuan, the hometown of Giant Pandas.

Qixia Temple, a Quasi-Tang Structure

The Qixia Temple, first built in the Tang Dynasty (618—907), was renovated in 2002. The style of its Great Buddha Hall and Drum and Bell Towers is similar to that of Hong Kong's Chi Lin Nunnery. They are the two most complete and quaintest Tang-dynasty temples.

Memorial of Hong Kong's Home Return

In the Chinese Culture and Art Square in Seven Star Park, you'll see a mural 106 metres long and 5 metres tall. The longest relief project in China, it consists of 100 stone sculptures in 26 groups, portraying China's over 7,000 years of history, the four world-known inventions and the significant events of different dynasties. Standing on a round granite terrace in the centre of the square is a ding (a symbol of state power), built by Guilin to mark Hong Kong's home return to the motherland. It is one of the main art pieces of the park.

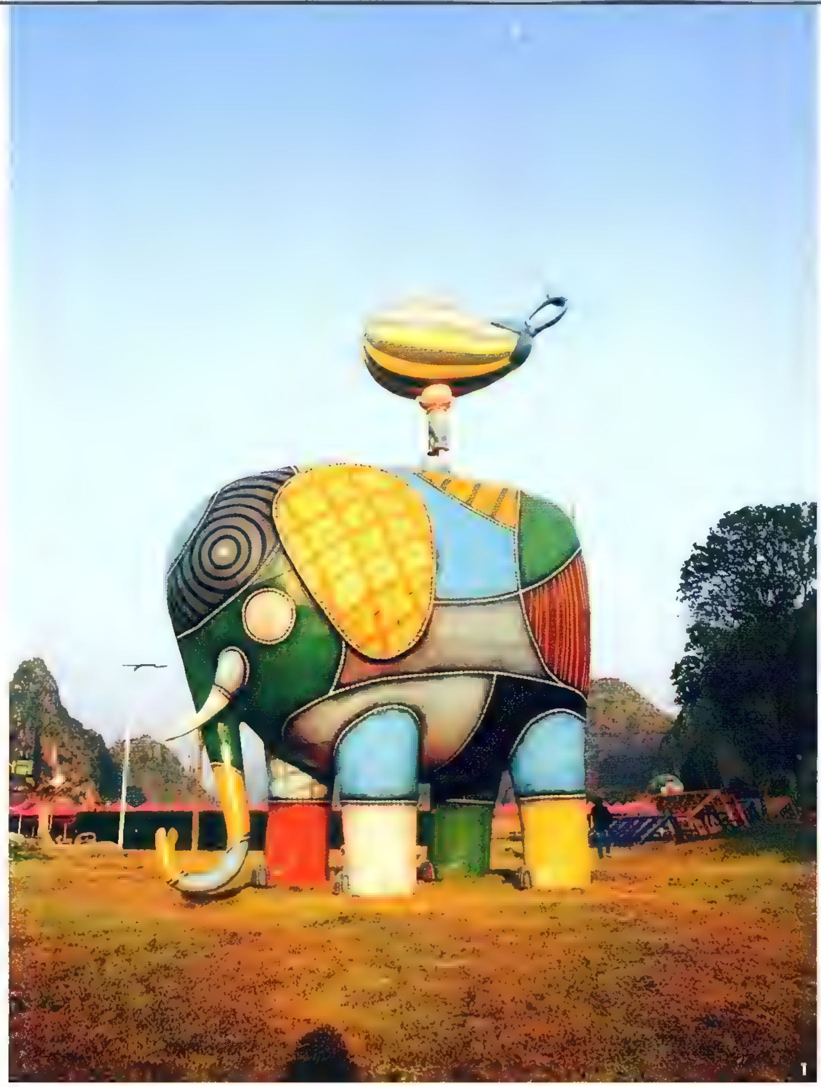
1. The image of the bronze figurine unearthed from Sichuan's Sanxingdui also appears on the mural in the square.

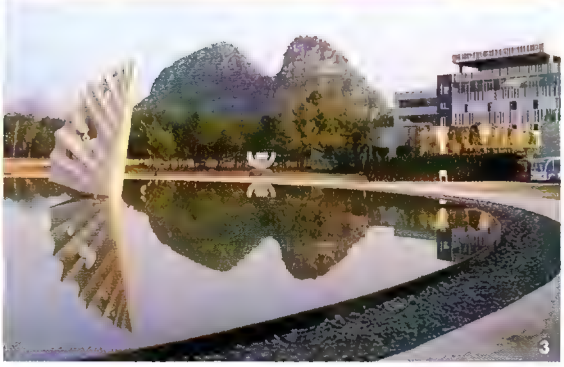
2. Giant Panda Yue Yue.

3. Flowery Bridge mirrored in the water.

Going to Seven Star Park

Add: 1 Qixing Rd, Guilin
Transport: Bus No. 10, 11, 14
Admission: 35 yuan/ Scenic Area; 30 yuan/ Seven Star Rock
Opening hours: 06:00 ~ 19:30





Yuzi Paradise Land of Dreams

On the way from Guilin to Yangshuo, I enjoyed the overwhelming view of the karst landforms. And entering Yuzi Paradise was another surprise.

When Art Meets Nature

I Art is a land where modern art co-exists with nature in harmony. It's a large theme park of sculpture and an open-air museum of art. It is also a holiday resort combining natural landscape, art, food and accommodation.

Here, you'll find more than 200 pieces of work by 150 artists from 47 countries. Some may be familiar as they are modeled on the works of Jimmy and other Taiwan artists. Under the premise not to destroy the natural landscape, the artificial works are placed in harmony with the surroundings and the huge sculptures form a visual contrast with the dense woods.

But art doesn't always have to be sophisticated with few followers. Visitors can try 'DIY' in Yuzi Paradise. For example, you can be a carpenter and make a table, or anything you can imagine, or stay a whole week here like a real artist.

Hotel of Modern Art

After enjoying many artistic works in the park you will also find the hotel itself to be another work of art. This is no exaggeration. The hotel's name HoMA (Hotel of Modern Art) was inspired by MoMA, the New York-based and world-leading Museum of Modern Art. From the name, you can guess the hotel's pursuit of art. Everywhere you go you're surrounded by it. In the lounge or the passage, you'll find yourself surrounded by photographs, paintings and displays of various styles. The rooms also have a strong artistic feeling. The suites are nice for young couples. The white colour of the furniture stands in vivid contrast with the bright red and orange. Crossing the living room, you directly enter the bedroom giving you the feeling of living in a cave. The executive suites have another style, with Southeast Asian furniture, bright flowery decorations and a curtained bed. With all these features, no wonder HoMA is the only Chinese hotel on the list of the 2007 French RELAIS & CHATEAUX.

1. The figures of Taiwan illustrator poet Jimmy have become the theme sculpture in the park.

2. The artistic luxury suites appeal to anyone.

3. A lakeside view of the tranquil theme park.

Going to Yuzi Paradise

Add: Dabu Township, Yanshan District, Guilin

Transport: Special buses ply the route between Guilin Bus Station and Yuzi Paradise, and the last bus leaves at 18:40. Fare: 5 yuan/ person

Admission: 80 yuan for Chinese tourists and 100 yuan for foreigners. Opening hours: 08:30 ~ 18:30

Accommodation: The prices range from 780 ~ 5,080 yuan for single, standard and luxury rooms of various grades.

Reservation: (773) 3865 555 Website: www.yuzile.com

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Yangshuo A Visit to West Street

The West Street in Yangshuo is only 35 minutes drive from Yuzi Paradise. It has become well known from the countless stories that have taken place on the street, many of them love stories. Attracted by its romantic fame, many foreigners have come a long way to visit and sometimes not only their backpacks stay, but also their 'sweet' hearts. They stay here, get married, have children and open bars and restaurants of all kinds.

Sandalwood Shop

The street unfolds more of its charms at night, with the dim light of shops shining on the 1,000-metre-long road and jazz in the distance. But I was very eager to see as much as possible within a short time, so the slow pace of West Street did not suit my style.

Entering a small souvenir shop, I noticed a strong scent of sandalwood. The shop was full of accessories and handicrafts from Tibet, Nepal and India. The assistant gave me a brief glance but seemed more interested in enjoying his knick-knacks than selling them. I liked that easy way to do business, no hard selling at all.

Beer Fish that Will Never Be Drunk

I had left the sandalwood scent behind when my nose detected another delicious aroma. It was Beer Fish, a must-try speciality of Yangshuo. Stir-fry the fish newly caught from the Lijiang River, together with slices of ginger and other seasoning, put in half a bottle of beer and some red pepper, braise with a low fire and your Beer Fish is done. I had previously thought the dish would make me tipsy. But this time I only got a 'beer-belly'.

Not drunk from the Beer Fish, I turned to the Bar Street for pleasure. But with so many bars out there, which one to try? I looked up and saw an eye-catching sign of a two-storey bar, 'Moonlight on the West Street'. Very poetic I thought so in I went, but found that I was the only guest. I ordered a cocktail and watched the street from upstairs. There were few people in the street below and not much chance of romance, I would have to explore further. But I reflected, perhaps romance only takes place in love stories...

Going to Yangshuo

Transport: It is a one hour drive from the city of Guilin to Yangshuo. From the Yangshuo bus station you can walk to West Street or take a taxi for 15 yuan. You can also take the sightseeing boat from Mopanshan or Zhujiang docks in Guilin. It takes four hours along the river to Yangshuo.

Restaurants:
Aladdin Add: 18 Guihua Rd, Yangshuo Tel: (773) 8819 175
Fu Gui Lou Add: 3-4 Guihua Rd, Yangshuo Tel: (773) 8813 593
West Street Moonlight Restaurant Add: 83 West Street, Yangshuo Tel: (773) 8827 953
Accommodation:
Ke Ke Hotel Add: 80 West Street, Yangshuo Tel: (773) 8829 188

1. The West Street is charming at night.

2. Beer Fish, the best-known dish in Yangshuo, 40 yuan/ 500 g

3. Cocktail Maguey: 35 yuan

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Rongshui Miao Ethnic Customs

Rongshui, 154 km from Guilin, is the only Miao Autonomous County in Guangxi. Boarding the boat at Lankou Dock, you'll enjoy the pleasant scenery along the Beijiang River. The clear water and the dense forest of bamboo on the banks are indeed a sight for sore eyes. Soon you'll find yourself at Goutan Miao Village.

Greeting with Glutinous Rice Wine

The villagers in their colourful costumes were already waiting for visitors at the entrance. The bright colours were very refreshing and the white feathers they wore looked striking. The first greeting was a full cup of rice wine. Nobody knew why the Miao girls were especially fond of the guests wearing glasses and red clothes, I felt lucky that I was the only one who didn't wear glasses.

Miao Courting Dance

The Miao people are very good at dancing and singing. At festivals, they will play their *lusheng* (reed-pipe wind instrument), while dancing to the tunes of the music. To welcome us they performed a dance that is usually reserved for Spring Festival celebrations. They also performed their Wine-Presenting Dance and Manghao Dance.

When the Courting Dance began, we were invited to join in. Hand in hand, we followed the leader and formed a circle. The movements are quite simple: as you dance, you step on the shoes of the people next to you. My shoes soon became very dusty and my heels were trodden on several times. Later I learned from my tour guide that stepping on the toes means liking you; on the instep, hoping to become your sweetheart and on the heel, loving you forever.

Thrilling Horse Fight

After the dance, we went to watch the exciting horse fight. This is a traditional event of the Miao people, which originated from the duel of love rivals. When two or more men love one woman, the tribal head would organise a fight between the horses of the rivals to decide the argument. Today, the horse fight has become a must-see of Miao festivals.

In the arena, a mare was driven out to flirt with two stallions. To win her favour and get the chance to approach her, the two stallions tried their best to attract her by raising their heads and tails high. But the mare favoured one of them and this made the other very jealous. It suddenly pounced upon its rival and the two began to fight fiercely. The masks they wore didn't stop them from trying to overcome each other. At times they even stood up on their rear legs making a very thrilling scene.

Going to Rongshui

Transport: The passenger bus departs from Liuzhou Bus Station every 30 minutes, and it takes an hour and 12 yuan to Rongshui. From Lankou Dock, 12 km from Rongshui county seat, you can take a boat to Goulan Miao Village. The ticket for the boat and the village: 128 yuan.

1. Manghao dance of the Miao is named after the God of Mt Manghao, who is a symbol of happiness and auspiciousness.

2. Thrilling horse fight at the annual Lusheng Festival. Lusheng is a popular musical instrument used by the Miao.

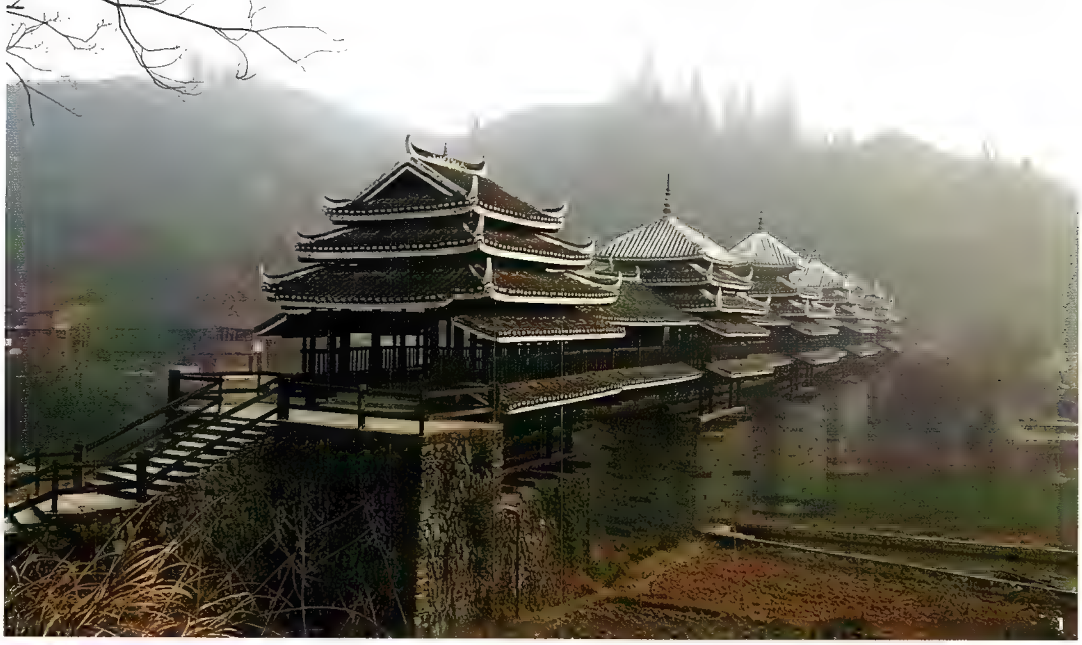
3. Who can reject the invitation of the hospitable Miao ladies?

Travel Tips

Transport: There are flights between Hong Kong and Guilin everyday. Inquiry: (852) 2155 1888 Website: www.hkairlines.com

Accommodation:

Guilin Lijiang Waterfall Hotel Add: 1 Chanhu Rd North, Guilin Tel: (773) 2822 881



Going to Sanjiang

Transport: There is scheduled bus departing from the county seat to Chengyang, which reaches the destination in 30 minutes.

Fare: 5 yuan

It costs 10 yuan per person to charter a mini-van, or 200 yuan per day. The Dong people banquet has to be booked in advance. Cost: 500 ~ 1,000 yuan. Inquiry: (772) 8618 448. The performance of the Dong is free of charge.

Chengyang Ancient Bridge and Village Banquet

Leaving the Miao village, we headed for Chengyang Scenic Area in Sanjiang Dong Autonomous County. Here we were impressed by the Dong culture as spanning the river is a century-old wooden covered bridge. The village, water wheel and the people working in the fields form a terrific backdrop for cameras.

Typical Dong Architecture

Walking around in the village, we were captivated by the unique Diaojiaolou (stilt houses). The ground floor is for poultry and the upstairs for residence. Hung in front of the door is preserved meat and dried vegetables. What a simple, but comfortable life the Dong people have!

To receive increasing visitors, some inns are being built in the style of local buildings. But to have an authentic experience of the Dong's life, the suspension buildings are no doubt the best place to stay.

In the centre of all the Dong villages we visited — Ma'an, Yan, Da and Dong — we saw a Drum Tower, another typical Dong structure. The whole tower is usually made of fir without a single nail. According to the Dong tradition, each clan builds a drum tower of its own. As the height and the decoration embody the clan's value of aesthetics, the whole clan will feel very proud of their majestic tower and its exquisite decorations.

Village Banquet

The open air space in front of the Drum Tower is where the villagers dance or hold festival gatherings. Here we took part for the first time in their Village Banquet and witnessed their unity and hospitality.

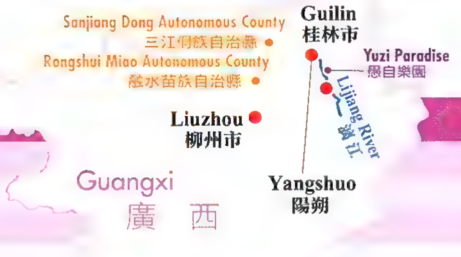
The Village Banquet is also called Long-Table Dinner where the villagers set up their tables one after another before the tower and the households display their homemade dishes on the tables, such as sour fish, sour meat, radish, sweet potato, konjak and cooked glutinous rice. Of course, rice wine must be prepared. After everything is ready, the whole village will sit at the long-table to enjoy the grand feast. They pass on the dishes so that everyone can have a taste of them all. When they drink, they shout loudly. Though not a native Dong, sitting among them I forgot who I was and became part of the village.

Translated by Julia Han

1. Chengyang Roofed Bridge, a typical Dong structure, is nearly 100 years old.

2. Dong girls can compete with male members of the village in playing their bamboo-pipe instrument.

3. The grand Village Banquet of the Dong.

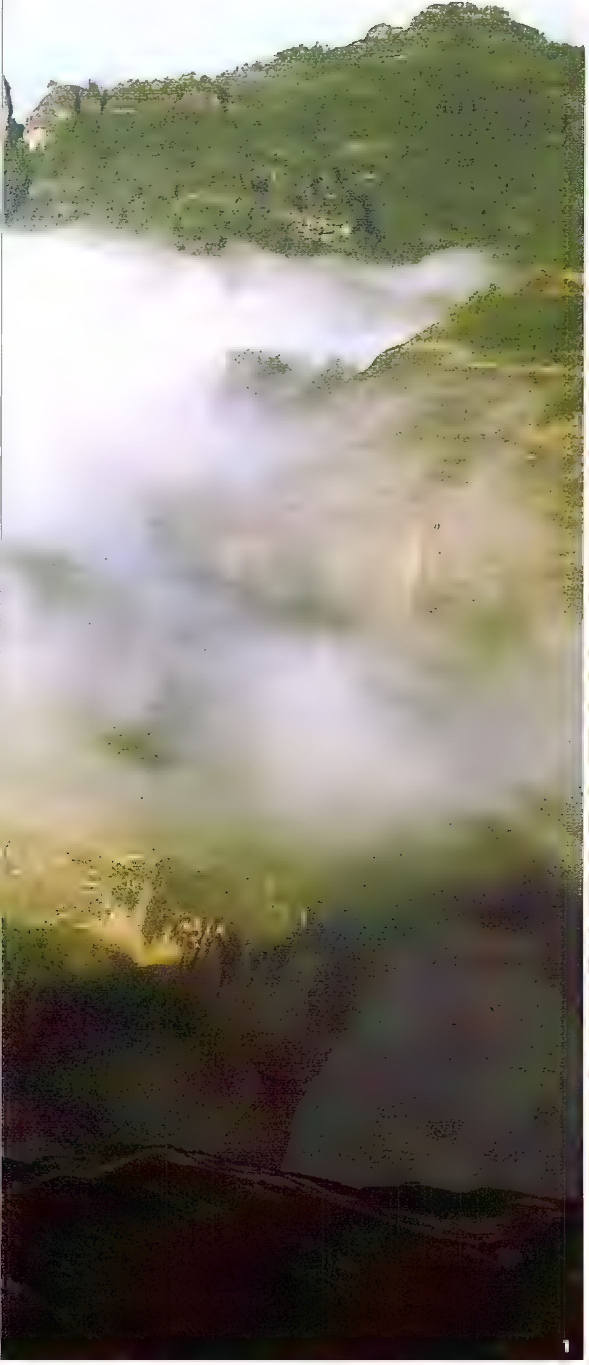


Nationality Hotel	Add: 61 Yangshuo West Street	Tel: (773) 8829 988
Liuzhou Regent Hotel	Add: 32 Longcheng Rd	Tel: (772) 2808 888
Sanjiang Hotel	Add: 2 Xinhua Rd, Guyi Town, Sanjiang County	Tel: (772) 8626 888

Ascending the Peaks of Mt Wuyi

Mt Wuyi is known for it's stunning natural beauty, fresh air and almost luminous glow. The increasingly popular site is the perfect place to sip tea, listen to the sounds of nature and replenish the soul.

Photos · Ma Peiwen, Suzan So et al
Article · Suzan So



1. The misty clouds wrapped around Mt Wuyi have frustrated many photographers. (by Ma Peiwen)

2. Rafting on the Nine Bends Stream is an important part of any trip to Mt Wuyi. Take your time in appreciating the rocks and peaks of different shapes and sizes. (by Zheng Youyu)

3. The sedan chair carriers are amazingly fast. It takes them only about three hours to carry a sedan chair up and down the mountain — a speed faster than any walker.

Located in the north of Fujian Province, Mt Wuyi (or Wuyishan) is formed from red glutenite, featured in the typical landform known as 'danxia'. It is one of China's few national tourist sites that have been honoured with both 'World Natural Heritage' and 'World Cultural Heritage' titles. Wuyishan was considered a backwater in the past since there were few attractions apart from the mountains and water. But times have changed and today the area has a new look.

Ascending the Heights Against All Odds

I had climbed Yellow Mountain, therefore I thought I could take Mt Wuyi in my stride. After breakfast, a few friends and I started marching towards Tianyou (Heavenly Tour) Peak. En route, we were laughing and our mood was buoyant. Tianyou Peak is 410 metres above sea level. The uphill climb starts from Chadong and reaches the peak after 828 stone steps up the steep cliff-face. At the beginning of December, it was late autumn on Mt Wuyi. The temperature was about 10°C during the day, and much lower at night.

The big queue of tourists was like an endless stream. Only looking back did I notice the mountain trail was steeper than I had thought. The climbers, men and women, old and young, were ascending the hill by using their feet, hands and mouths — while they

1. Children having the time of their lives climbing up a large stone sculpture in the Yulinting Scenic Area, a great spot for an outing.

2. The Yulinting kiln dates back to the Song dynasty. The black-glazed tea set used for ancient tea competitions was fired here.

3. Boasting an elegant environment, the Wuyishan Scenery Golf Club attracts a lot of holiday golfers.

4. Dahongpao Scenic Area is named for its production of a famous type of tea, Dahongpao, or Great Red Gown.

5. Drinking tea is good for cultivating peace of mind and elegant ma

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balanced their bodies with their hands, they shouted loudly, 'Hello, friends up there on the top!' Eventually I climbed up to the Tianyou Peak and viewed the fantastic panorama of Wuyishan in the distance. Yunu Peak was clearly in sight. At this place of grandeur, I felt my mind had broadened and was in an elated mood. On this day Mt Wuyi was not enveloped in cloud. It had dropped its usual veil and the sun was soothing. Tourists had a clear view of the mountain. In the far distance, bamboo rafts drifted on the Nine Bend Creek. It was a scene from a typical Chinese nature painting.

Mysterious Cliff-hung Boat-shaped Coffins

On Tianyou Peak, one could use the telescope at 3 yuan to have a look at the cliff-hung coffins, while a guide explained the story behind the coffins. It is believed that the tradition of the boat-shaped coffins was passed down by the ancient Yue people. The history goes back 3,400 years. When someone passed away, the ancient Yue people hollowed out a huge piece of *nanmu* (Phoebe Zhennan) wood as a coffin for the deceased. Yet it remains unknown just how the ancient people lowered and fixed the hulking coffins onto the steep cliff-face.

In fact Mt Wuyi is not a tough climb. The trail has few treacherous sections. Some tourists still chose to pay for a sedan chair, enjoying the scenery while riding up on a swinging seat. It takes more than three hours by sedan-chair up and down Mt Wuyi, but it is faster than walking. The cost for a round-trip was 230 yuan per person. The sedan chair carriers deserve every single penny they make.

Amazing Great Red Gown Tea

On the next day of the itinerary an important activity is drinking tea. The tea produced in Mt Wuyi is famous. In particular, Dahongpao (Great Red Gown) is the best. It produces a rich fagrance of sweet osmanther. Even after being soaked nine times, it still has a lingering flagrance. However, the annual production of Dahongpao traditionally was just 2 kilos, an amount so small it failed to meet the needs of consumers. In 1997, Dahongpao tea was auctioned in Hong Kong. The price was HK$1.36 million per kilo. Both the price and rarity were astonishing. After years of research and implantation by the Wuyi Tea Research and Development Institute, the Dahongpao tea tree can now be reproduced asexually. Accordingly the production of Dahongpao has increased. Now the common people can taste this top brand of Wuyi tea.

We visited a tea house to study the different ways of drinking tea. The tea house hostess said that the authentic way to drink tea was to drink with sound. She gripped the tea cup elegantly with the thumb and forefinger in her feminine 'orchid-shaped fingers'. She then savoured the tea with different sipping sounds, the enjoyment evident on her face. Top-grade tea requires a top-grade tea set to elicit its essence. The

Yulinting kiln was initially built in the Northern Song dynasty (960—1127). The black-glazed tea set for 'tea competitions', a popular activity in the dynasty, was fired here. Tea competitions in the Song dynasty were a popular social practice and the tea set was critical. Of those passed down from the Song dynasty, the 'Gold Drawing' and 'Silver Painted' black-glazed tea sets were the most valuable. Only three pieces are left and these are scattered around the world, their owners in other countries.

In the Yulinting Scenic Spot, there are such facilities as a museum, porcelain workshop, the Long Kiln built against the mountain slope and the Porcelain Workshop that allows tourists to hand-make porcelain. City dwellers can dive into a world of creativity.

Tasting Local Farmers' Dishes

We had lunch at a local restaurant called Dong's Family Feast. It served local dishes made with local ingredients. The restaurant was in an ancient mansion, which was used as the set for the TV serial, 'Sword Stained with Royal Blood', based on a kung fu novel by Louis Cha. The main gate is decorated with delicate brick carving. The walls of the house are hung with antique horizontal tablets, traditional Chinese paintings and calligraphy. Despite the fancy surroundings, the local dishes were plain.... but they required a healthy appetite. Chicken, wild boar, cliff mushrooms, egg... all were local ingredients. And the host's superb cooking ensured they were delicious. A lunch for 10 people, with more than 10 courses and free refills of plain rice, cost us only 300 yuan. The average price per person was something like the cost of a plate of rice at a fast-food canteen. It was a great deal.

After lunch, we walked to Caodun Old Village nearby. Photo lovers will be captivated by the aged and weathered constructions in the village. Caodun is located between mountains and farming fields, with the the Tongmuxi River, at the upper reaches of the Nine Bend Creek, running across. The village still has its traditional workshops, barbershop, ginhouse, tofu shop, smithy and herbal medicine shop. These workshops have stood for hundreds of years, witnessing the many changes the village has been through. An old granny was busy throughout the day selecting tea leaves. She was paid less than 5 yuan a day. Her easy and relaxed look gave me an important message. Be content with what we have — perhaps that was what I lacked. I was envious of these simple villagers.

Translated by Zhang Boli

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Travel Tips

Admissions of Mt Wuyi Scenic Area: 110 yuan for a one-day pass, 120 yuan for a two-day pass and 130 yuan for a three-day pass. Rafting on Nine Turns Stream: 100 yuan/ person.

Flight ticket: Xiamen Airlines has direct flights between Mt Wuyi and Hong Kong on Wednesdays and Saturdays at about HK$2,200. Inquiry: (852) 2806 0577

Accommodation

Wuyishan Scenery Golf Club Hotel Villa (five-star)

If you are a golfing fan, this hotel will be your best choice. The Golf Club is a standard 18-hole 72-par court. The full length of the course is 7,033 yards. A 3-day 2-night golf package with accommodation costs about 1,380 yuan per person.

Add: Wuyi National Tourist Resort, Fujian Province.

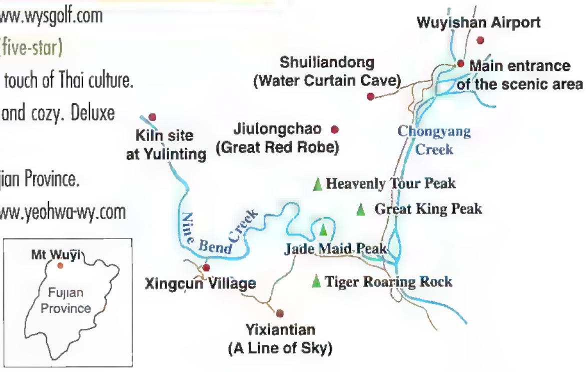
Tel: (599) 523 9999 Website: www.wysgolf.com

Mt Wuyi Mountain Yeohwa Resort (five-star)

The resort is brand new, with a heavy touch of Thai culture. The spa and teahouse are spacious and cozy. Deluxe garden view double room: 980 yuan.

Add: Wuyi National Tourist Resort, Fujian Province.

Tel: (599) 523 8999 Website: www.yeohwa-wy.com



Retreat in Shuhe Old Town

Photos & Article • Li Zhixiong

I love the look and feel of ancient streets when it's raining. That's why I picked rainy days for both my visits to Shuhe, a small old town in Yunnan. As I watch people and horses going about their business and hurrying along the slick, worn granite slabs of Sifang Street, it's as though I've been transported back to a by gone age.

The path of the ancient tea caravan took two major routes. The first route starts in the mountains of Menglihai County, Yunnan, and winds its way via Dali, Lijiang, Shangri-La and Dêqên in Yunnan. It then takes the Bamda-Zayu road or the Qamdo-Lhorong-Nyingchi road, to arrive in Lhasa. It continues onwards to Myanmar via Gyangzê and Yatung. The second route starts at Ya'an in Sichuan and arrives at Lhasa via Luding, Kangding, Batang and Qamdo. The two major roads are connected by many smaller roads and tracks that crisscross the giant Tibet-Yunnan-Sichuan triangle.

The Age-old Road

Shuhe Town in Lijiang was once an important distribution centre. All the tea produced in Xishuangbanna was brought here and transferred by horse caravans to Tibet, where tea is a daily essential.

At the outbreak of war in 1937, the Ancient Tea Caravan Route became extremely busy — it was the only international transport road out of China at that time. Large amounts of cigarettes from the UK and the US; khaki, corduroy and wool fabric from the UK; and a variety of other daily supplies like towels, toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap and razors were transported along the ancient road, behind Chinese the lines which were fighting Japanese troops. So it was that Shuhe Town was once full of a wide variety of goods from the allied forces.

If you go west along Sifang (Square) Street in Shuhe and cross the Qinglong (Blue Dragon) Bridge, you arrive at a road made of granite slabs. Over the years, hundreds of horse caravans have made their way along this road, which is said to have been paid for by a group of businessmen known as the 'Tibetan guests'. The businessmen used this route for trade during the 1930s and 1940s, and needed it to be accessible all year long. Today, the natural patterns in the granite slabs are still visible. Not much seems to have changed in the old shops at either side of the road though — they still sell saddles, horse bells, hurricane lamps, leather sacks, butter buckets and many other old-fashioned goods and handicrafts from Tibet, India and Nepal.

An Old 'Tibetan Guest'

Aged 61, Li Zixin lives in Songyuan Village, part of Shuhe Town. His ancestors, going back seven to eight generations, were 'Tibetan guests' who tended horse caravans on the tea route. His ancestors came to Shuhe and began to make a living as leatherwear makers.

At that time, most of the leatherwear makers in Shuhe were famous craftsmen from Yingtianfu (current-day Nanjing). Early in the Ming dynasty (1368—1644), some of the leatherwear craftsmen in Yingtianfu made a unique boot-shaped lantern for the lantern festival. The emperor did not take kindly to this and accused them of mocking his large feet. As punishment, they were exiled to Yunnan. Some of these craftsmen wound their way to Lijiang, where they continued to make leather goods. They soon began selling expertly crafted Tibetan boots, leather shoes, leather sacks and leather straps that were perfect for conditions in the highlands of Yunnan, Sichuan and Tibet. Their products were popular among those tending to horses, and they were soon swamped with orders and had to take on apprentices. By the end of the 1940s, Renli, Jiewei and Songyuan villages in Shuhe were home to over 300 families of leatherwear makers. Even today, you will still find quite a number of shoemakers' and tailors' shops in Shuhe Town.

Li Zixin's ancestors saved a tidy sum from making and trading leather goods. With this seed money, they bought mules and horses for use in the caravans, and made a living tending horses on the route between Yunnan and Tibet. They turned from leatherwear makers into 'majiaozi', the men who cared for the horses on the journey. Li Zixin's great-grandfather soon had caravan of his own. His caravan transported tea, copperware and other goods from Shuhe to Tibet. Traders would arrive at Shuhe and sell their goods to Li Zixin's great-grandfather and other caravan owners, leaving them to carry the goods further along the route. These traders then turned around and went back the way they had come, unable to speak the local dialect, endure the lack of oxygen at high altitudes or cope with the bitter cold of the highlands. The route that Li Zixin's great-grandfather took was often treacherous: steep mountains and freezing rivers were

1. A scroll painted with an image of Lijiang old town, by Fan Shujiang. It is about 60 metres long and attracts many tourists who make a special visit to see it.

2. The 'Tibetan Guests' in the old town do not need to travel to Tibet any more. They can make decent money by simply guiding tourists.

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commonplace, and at one river the goods had to be winched across using ropes and pulleys. It was a hard life, lived on horseback. The caravan carried fur, herbs and other specialities of the mountains from Tibet back to Lijiang. Non-local caravans then picked up the goods and took them all over the country.

Today, as Shuhe grows in prosperity, tourists are flocking to visit it. They come to see this important waypoint on the Ancient Tea Caravan Route, and the Li family offers them a ride in a horse-drawn carriage through the town.

New 'Tibetan Guests', Same Old Town

Bunong is an old friend of mine in Lijiang. He has made two solo trips along the Ancient Tea Caravan Route, with only the sound of the bells hung from the horses' necks to break the monotony. Along the way, he sketched Lancang River and Mt Karwakapo on two pieces of wood, and added notes about his thoughts and feelings about the road trip. He hung one of the pieces of wood around the neck of one of his horses, and the other around his own. He made it to the end of the tough journey, safe and sound. He says he met nine living Buddhas on the tea route, and received blessings from all of them. He decided to open a small shop selling his own brand of horse bells, as a way of sharing peace and blessings. He called the shop 'Bunong Bells', and business grew briskly. He moved to a new shop in an old house near a stone bridge. Now, when tourists come to see the bridge, they hear the tinkling of Bunong's bells. The business has continued to prosper over the last 10 years.

Bunong's house is also a 'place to eat, drink and sleep' and a 'harbour for wanderers' — so the signs at the main gate say. Bunong's house is less than 20 metres from the Shuhe waypoint on the Ancient Tea Caravan Route. It's in a beautiful part of what is known as 'bar street', and it's where I stayed on both of my visits to Shuhe. During the day, I listened to Bunong's music collection. At night, I sat listening to the river flowing by, still and peaceful.

Different Bars, Different Moods

The bars of Shuhe attract the tourists, and every evening local villagers perform traditional dances and songs for them.Customers can watch the performances whilst trying the local food and drink.

Ten years ago, it was still possible to sit and read quietly in the bars of Lijiang. Not any more. If you grow tired of the noisy bars in Lijiang old town, head for Shuhe.

Standing on the Qinglong Bridge, you'll see the Long Men Ke Zhan(龍門客棧). A banner with the guesthouse's name on it flutters in the wind and sunflowers grow in the dilapidated courtyard. Wooden posts are laid out in a field, ready for drying

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grains. If you were to take a rest here, listening to music and reading your book, no one would disturb you.

I sat at table in a bar called Sheng Huo Hui Guan (生活會館), ordered a bottle of beer and a plate of crab apple. I flipped through a few thick songbooks — it was obvious the owners were music lovers. It turns out they have composed over 400 original songs. Holding a guitar, they sang about friendship, families, love, life, dreams... anything at all.

Algarve is a cafe run by a man from Macau who lived in Taiwan for years. At the door to the cafe hung a beautiful image of a girl's face that shone like the sun. The cafe owner visited Shuhe during his travels, and became obsessed with the place. He went back to Macau, but found he was pining for Shuhe. So he returned, and set up shop here. I hadn't expected to find such an authentic cup of Portuguese Galao coffee in Shuhe.

I can't remember the name of the most interesting bar I found. It was right next to Bunong's place, by the water. As you go through the first part of the house, you'll see a courtyard. One of the walls of the house had been removed, and inside there were a lot of tatami mats. Two years ago a young couple, a businessman from Chengdu and a freelancer from Kunming, met here and fell in love. They exchanged e-mails and planned to meet here again, on the woman's 26th birthday. They prepared a birthday cake and the cafe owner organized a barbequed suckling pig. They invited me to join them, as they needed help to finish the pig.

The owner barbequed the suckling pig over red-hot charcoal in the courtyard. The weather was drizzling and gloomy, and there were hardly any other customers. The red lanterns were lit, and we drank home-brewed white wine and feasted on suckling pig.

That same day, the businessman proposed to his sweetheart, using the pig's tail as a gift. I was the witness.

Translated by Zhang Boli

1. Cloth, woven by Mosuo women, in the old town.

2. Taking tourists on a ride in a horse-drawn carriage is a new source of income for Li Zixin, a descendant of the horsemen who worked the tea route.

3. Shuhe old town is now a hot tourist spot. Previously, it was a waypoint on the ancient tea route.

4. The many faces of Shuhe's bars. All are different, individual and offer a unique experience.

Travel Tips

Transport: There are flights from Shenzhen and Guangzhou to Lijiang. The one-way air ticket costs 1,630 yuan from Shenzhen and 1,790 yuan from Guangzhou. The flight takes two hours and 10 minutes. Shuhe is 4km from central Lijiang. The taxi fare to Shuhe from Lijiang is 15 yuan, while the mini-bus fare is 2 yuan per person.

Entry fee to Shuhe Old Town: 30 yuan (free if you are staying in the old town)

Accommodation in Shuhe: There are many hostels in the old town, for example: Bunong's Compound, Shuhe Guest House and Peach Valley Guest House. A one-bed room will cost less than one hundred yuan.

Compared with the other regional cuisines of China, Yunnan cuisine is like a low profile hermit that is layback and yet strong in character; simple and yet sophisticated.

Photos • Li Zhixiong   Article • Wang Rong

Kunming: Old Tastes in New Dishes

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Must-tries

Duan Shi Xuia Guo (端仕小鍋) on Wenlin Street was founded by Qi Yong-an of Yuqi in 1930. Rice noodles in small pot and rice cake shreds are the most popular dishes.

Some people say that those who make traditional snacks are not really chefs but only sort of artisans. Some also think that performing a skill to the most sophisticated level is an art. If we would label the chefs' cooking of rice noodles as only a skill, then their rice cake shreds must be a piece of art. Similar to cooking rice noodles, the chef started with putting the soup (but in a smaller quantity) into the copper pot, and added the rice cake shreds and cooked for one to two minutes. Then while the chief chef was stir-frying the rice cake shreds with a small ladle, he added the seasoning ingredients. His actions were so fast that I was able to see exactly how he stir cooked it and spread the sauce evenly to each shred. The bowl of rice cake shreds was a united whole and yet every shred was not melt and stuck with each other.

When the stir-fried rice cake shreds were almost done, the chef put some pea sprouts on the top and pressed on it lightly with his ladle. Next he took up the pot and gently tossed the rice cake shreds into the air. Then the shreds fell into the pot again, with the peas at the bottom this time. Now the chef did not have stir-fry the shreds anymore and he swung the pot in circles. When the pea sprouts were also done, the chef took up a basin and gently poured reddish rice cake shreds mixed with the greeny peas into the basin. The

1. Cooking rice noodle is an art.

2. Rice noodle is locals' favourite food.

3. Toasted tofu can be seen anywhere in Kunming.

4. A hundred-year-old residence Jian Xin Yuan.

mixture of the red and green colours looked like a painting. The chef gave one final golden touch to the dish by spreading some deep-fried meat cubes ('cui shao') on the top.

Duan Shi Xiao Guo also sells toasted rice cakes in the morning. They are served with sweet or salty sauces. And the salty sauce is added with salted bean curd, oily chili, minced meat, mushroom and peanuts.

Recommended: Rice noodles in small pot 3 yuan/ bowl, rice cake shreds 5 yuan/ bowl, toasted rice cakes 1.5 yuan/ slice

Jian Xin Yuan (建新園) was built in 1906. The main restaurant is on Baoshan Street, Kunming City. Presently it has ten branch restaurants.

The favourite dishes of Jian Xin Yuan to Yunnan locals are Cuiwang Rice noodles (rice noodles with meat and chicken blood) and Yezi Rice noodles (rice noodle with pig skins). The essences of Cuiwang Rice noodles are its 'Cui' and 'Wang'. 'Cui' is tiny cubes of deep fried pork used as the topping for the rice noodles. When you are chewing the pork cubes, you can hear the 'crispy' sounds in your mouth. 'Wang' is made of solidified chicken blood and seasoning ingredients. Besides Cuiwang and Xuewang, there are also secondary ingredients such as 'white meat' (pork), salted bean curd, bean sprouts and bean curd sheets.

The topping of Yezi rice noodles is sun dried pig skin which is deep fired, softened by water and then cooked with seasonings. The pig skin is soft and pliable as well as tasty. There is rather little pig skin in each bowl. But you can still enjoy the rice noodles and soup after eating all the pig skin.

Recommended: Guiwang rice noodles 4 yuan/ bowl, Yezi rice noodles, 6 yuan/ bowl, Guoqiao (Crossing the Bridge) rice noodles 6 yuan/ bowl, 10 yuan/ bowl and 25 yuan/ bowl

Nan Lai Sheng (南來盛) is the first foreign restaurant in Kunming which offers French style bread and coffee. Its Vietnamese style rice flour rolls are also nice.

I was drawn to the restaurant by its reputation. Near the door, I saw its stall offering steamed rice flour rolls and ordered one dish. The staff switched up the burner under the steam pot. He then took out some rice thick fluid and spread a thin layer of the fluid on the sheer covering the mouth of the pot. With the hot steam below, the fluid quickly turned into a rice flour sheet. Then the staff tossed some mushroom cubes over the sheet and then rolled it up. Now a delicious rice flour roll was done.

Using my chopsticks, I picked up the Vietnamese rice flour roll. Steam was still rising from it. Before eating it, I dipped the roll into some seasoning sauce with a slight savour and spicy

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taste. The fresh sweet taste sprawled from my tongue tip throughout my whole body. The restaurant really deserved its reputation.

Recommended: Little rice flour roll 3 yuan/ dish, black coffee 5 yuan/ cup, hard bread 1.5 yuan/ slice

Modern Classics

Qiao Xiang Yuan (橋香園) was founded by the Jiange brothers of Mengzi on Wenlang Road, Kuming in 1988. Qiao Xiang Yuan is a chain of more than 10 restaurants which is the most popular in Kunming.

Ji Xin Yuan (吉鑫園) is one of the earliest restaurants specializing in Guoqiao rice noodles in Kunming. In the Kuming Expo 1999, the opening ceremony banquet was prepared by Ji Xin Yuan. One can also enjoy the Yunnan ethnic dancing performance at the restaurant.

One of the special features of Qiao Xiang Yuan is its crowdedness. Its branch restaurant at Xiaoximen is located at the junction of two roads; Renmin Road Central and Dengfeng Road. Everyday you can see a long queue of customers outside the restaurant. You'd better ask your friend to look for seats while you are buying the food purchase tickets so that you can enjoy your meal more comfortably. Or you will find yourself carrying bowls of rice noodles in hot soup and looking for a seat desperately. Qiao Xiang Yuan has branches in Daili and Beijing.

Ji Xin Yuan is on a piece of land of 18 acres and the restaurant premise has an area of more than 5,000 square metres. It is near the famous tourist spot of Kunming, World Expo' Park and many tours would dine here. The banquet hall on the second floor has a large stage on which the restaurant provides the diners with ome indigenous Yunnan dancing performance ('Guxin Yanwu' —ancient Xin banquet dance) while the latter are enjoying their food. Foreign visitors can have a glimpse of the local culture while tasting Yunnan cuisines.

Fu Zhao Lou (福照樓) is situated at 393 Lianmeng Road of the renowned food street of Bai Dai Men. It gained reputation from its steamed pot chicken.

1915 Diancai Shifu (滇菜食府) is in near the Huguo Bridge in the town centre and it offers all sorts of traditional and modern steam chicken pot such as Three Seven Steamed Pot Chicken and Sesame Steamed Pot Chicken, and Dang Guo (an aromatic herb) Steamed Pot Chicken. Its food prices are more or less similar to Fu Zhao Lou.

Fu Zhao Ju (福照居) and Fuzhao Street are run by the same ownership. Fuzhao Street is on Fuzaho Street of Wuyan Road Fu Zhao Ju is situated at the National Defence Printing Factory of Chuancheng Road.

The original Fu Zhao Lao, an old big name steamed pot chicken restaurant, was opened by the Baos couple of Jianshui. It is no longer there. The only one thing remains is the name of the restaurant.

The modern Fu Zhao Lou borrowed the name from the original restaurant and the female restaurant owner also speaks the Jianshui dialect which sounds like singing. Steamed Pot Chicken are charged according to the number of pots. The surface of chicken slices are rubbed with salt before they are put into the steam pot. Steam pot was invented by a local of Jianshui Yang Ling during the reign of the Qing Emperor Chienling. The design is that a duct is in the centre of the pot, extending from the bottom to the level of the lid. The steam of the soup base at the bottom passes through the duct condenses into chicken soup. Therefore, the soup of steamed pot chicken is the best essence of the ingredients. You should drink every drop of it.

I have no idea whether or not there is any secret cooking formula but I do know that the modern Fuzhao Lou, with their Jianshui purple earthen pot and pure local chickens and mastery of the cooking method, timing and flame intensity, has recreated the glory of the old brand name.

Steamed pot chicken is available in most Tian cuisine restaurants. In some of them, if chicken is not for your taste, you can choose other ingredients pork ribs, ducks, doves or even tofu.

Recommended: Regular steamed pot chicken; Large: 28 yuan/ pot, Medium: 38 yuan/ pot, Large: 48 yuan/ pot

Wu Shi Nian Lao Kunming, or **50 Years Old Kunming (五十年老昆明)**, is at 465 Baita (White Tower) Road. It is one of the oldest Yunnan cuisine restaurant in Kunming.

Ai Ruo Chun (藹若春) has three restaurants, namely Xiang Yun Dian, Jin Bi Dian and Jin Shi Dian. Jin Shi Dian, the most well-known one, is located at 45-47 Jin Shi Road, Jin Shi District.

Dian Xi Yuan (滇禧園) has a great variety of Tian cuisines: salted cow tongue of Xun Dian, Hong He chicken rice dumpling of Hong He, rice roll of Xiang Yun, fish-with-papaya of Dai Li, Sa Ba ham of Lu Quan, honey ribs of Mi Le, minced meat with chicken blood of Wei Shan, pea vermicelli of Zhao Tong, Qian Zhang Rou and Lao Lin Cai of Kunming.

Lao Jiao Zhuang (老腳莊) is a restaurant specializing in ham of Xuan Wei and home-cooked style dishes of north-eastern Yunnan, its signature dishes include 'Wumeng Jiao', 'Pipa Jiao', 'Hulu Jiao' and 'Wujin Jiao'...

Although steam pot chicken and 'cross-the-bridge' rice noodles are tasty, you would still feel bored if eating them everyday. Yunnan cuisines can be categorized into three groups according to the geographical regions: steam pot chicken, rice noodle and all sorts of tofu from southern Yunnan, the ethnic minority cuisines of western and north-western Yunnan, and the yogurt cakes of the Yi ethnic group, cheese and pot fish of the Bai minority, cold beef of the Dai group. Xuan Wei ham is the most popular cuisine in north-eastern Yunnan. The most appealing food in the restaurants is 'Gold-lining' ham which is made of the leanest part of a pig. It is served in slices. The yellow edges of the slices look like gold lining. The middle fat layer of each slice is transparent when it is hot and it becomes milk white when it cools down. The colours are sharp and gorgeous. It would be even more delicious if cooking the ham skin in salted vegetable soup. The significance of salted vegetables in Yunnan cuisine is like chillies in Sichuan cuisine. The salted vegetables mixed with ham skin smells appetizing and the vegetable with absorbed ham fat becomes lightly oiled and more delicious. The ham skin tastes even better with the salted vegetables.

Restaurants in Old Buildings

Located at 24 Zhonghe Alley, Qinghu Road South, **Shi Ping Guildhall (石屏會館)** is the only well-reserved group of guildhall buildings of the Qing dynasty in Kunming. The dishes here can be classified into four groups: Dali style, with unique fish vegetable; Shi Ping cuisine of southern Yunnan, with tofu as a major ingredient, Teng Chong taste of southwestern Yunnan,

1. Qino Xiang Yuan is the most popular chain restaurant serving Crossing the Bridge rice noodles in Kunming.
2. There are different kinds of ingredients for 'Crossing the Bridge' rice noodle.
3. Steamed pot chicken, a famous dish of Yunnan.

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with an emphasis on condiments, Qujing of northeastern Yunnan, its ham and mutton are special. The rice noodle cuisines of Yuqi of central Yunnan, And Dai, Hani ethnic minority diets.

Historically, Shi Ping nurtured many government officials and businessmen. Students of civil service exam and businesses often had to left their hometowns and embarked on long journeys. When they travelled en-route Kunming and temporarily stayed, they could find a shelter which was Shi Ping Guildhall built 200 years ago during the Qing dynasty.

Going up from a slope near Jade Lake, we will a huge gate at the top and the words 'Shi Ping Guildhall' on its memorial arch. It was written by Yuan Jingui, a top civil service exam candidate of the late Qing dynasty. In the 10th year of the Republican era, Yuan and a celebrity named Zhang Zhijiang had led the repair works of the hall. After entering the main gate, you will see a garden, green stone tiles and ancient style roofs. Further ahead is a two-storey wooden building with red pillars in classical Chinese style. Passing through the side hall is the second house and the third house. These two courtyards were built according the standard classical structure. The design of the house corners is very delicate and the small and sophisticated courtyard has become the washroom. The second floors of the houses are connected and you can get to the third house without going to the ground floor.

Sitting in an old, simple and pleasant suite, leaning forward against the railing and gazing afar. That makes you contemplate on the dreams and life of those candidates and businessmen. The distant stories in history suddenly seem to come alive. Then you would feel like ordering dishes like 'Tian Zi Meng Sheng' (the educated créam of the dynasty), 'Zhuang Yuan Ji Di' (success in exam) and Shi Ping vegetable with fried fish, and the locals' favourite roasted tofu. That would be fantastic.

Yi Ke Yin, Xiang He Yun Guildhall

The two restaurants are located near the Jiang Xiang Flower and Bird Market. Yi Ke Yin (一顆印) is in Ji Xiang Alley while Xiang He Yun Guildhall (祥和雲會館) is at Xiangyun Street. Both or them are historical houses of 'Yi Ki Yin' architectural style. They offer modern style Yunnan cuisines of lovely looks and good service. Customers at Yi Ke Yin often prefer to order some traditional Kunming style food and diners at Xiang He Yun Guildhall love the classic Dali taste.

Yi Ke Yin was a house built in 1852 and has a history of more than 150 years. It has three main blocks and with a side block on the left and the right. On the front side facing the street is a 'reverse block' the main door is in the middle. All the blocks are two storey high and the courtyard is in the centre. The residence area is surrounded by high walls on the outer edges of all sides. All the windows are closed most of the time. The square shape of the residence looks like an ink chop and the folks call it 'Yi Ke Yin' (a chop). In Kunming, there are not many well-preserved historical buildings left. When my companion of the trip entered this aged house, he was surprised to see that there was still such a beautiful historical site. Under the spring sunlight, we sat at the courtyard and ate cold dish of vegetable, steamed pork with preserved vegetable wrapped by lotus leaf, mini spicy chicken of Jingpo, salted raw shrimps of Erhu Lake.

Located at 8 Houxin Street, South Railway Station 1910 (1910火車南站) is a western style residential block built in 1948. Ever since its conversion to a restaurant, it has become a classic dinning place which is mentioned in many guide books.

The name 'South Railway Station 1910' is named after the Yunnan-Vietnam Railway which had its glorious days. In those years, the little train carried Yunnan locals to foreign places and also brought in visitors to the province from other countries. Nowadays, the train has stopped running. The restaurant in memory of the railway has become a place for nostalgic sensation to the bourgeois. Walking through the large red iron gate feels like being in a train compartment.

Walking upstairs to the second floor, you will find that all the rooms are also named after some train

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stations: Ma Huang Bao, La li He, Bi Se Zhai... We were like taking another trip on the Yunnan-Vietnam Railway. The name of every dish here is related to a place on the railway route: Nanqi Pig Stomach, Dog Street Chicken, Shi Ping Fortune Roll, Chenggong Yunnan Pork, Yunnan ham, Dishui pig intestine... They are mainly of the country style of southern Yunnan.

As a matter of fact, compared with other restaurant newly opened in recent years, this restaurant is not up to the standard of its counterparts in terms of the food, service, setting and price. Nevertheless, it is the earliest country-villa-restaurant in Kunming which had its glorious day. Even today, it is often packed with customers. However, I personally think that its pea vermicelli does not stick to the traditional style. Several essential ingredients of the traditional recipe of pea vermicelli are missing. The accompaniment 'gold fritters' may be a modified version of Chinese fritters but they are too oily. Their texture is not as good as that the fritters sold by open cooked food stalls in the streets.

Beside South Railway Station 1910 is another aged building of the same style and period which turned into a Sichuan cuisine restaurant called Shanghui Guildhall in 2003.

Dahuajiao Alley, Dongshi Street, Kunming city, **Jin Bi Chun (金碧春)** premise was originally the residence of the military leader Yunnan army commander and financial minister General Ma Cong. The building is a typical Chinese classical two-storey and four-combined-block style. It is one of the reserved historical and cultural heritage sites of Kunming which is more 100 years old. Its decoration and spatial design is the traditional Yunnan folk style. This residence combines the features of several Chinese traditional architectures mentioned earlier in this article. There are lots of aged photos of the past. Diners can have a glimpse of the history of Kunming while enjoying the culinary delights.

A waitress dressed in red windbreaker accompanied us to walk through the passage. Entering the front door of the general's residence, we could see a basin of burning wood coal nearby and feel the refreshing warmth of it. Once we were seated in the VIP room, the servers had already prepared the tea for us.

I began to ponder if the dinner guests of the General were as many as the dinners today. The food tray with golden inset shimmered under the room lighting. Looking at the colour and the cutting of the ham on the dish, I wonder if the general also had such luxuries as we do now. Being a resident chef at the general's residence should be no easy job.

I can hardly believe that I am in the urban centre while enjoying my meal against some soft background music in a hundred-year-old residence.

Translated by Ezekiel Pang

1. Dinning at a time-honoured residence in Kunming is an extraordinary experience.

2. Yi Ke Yin Restaurant was built at a historical residence of 1852.

3. Yunnan ham, another famous dish of Yunnan.

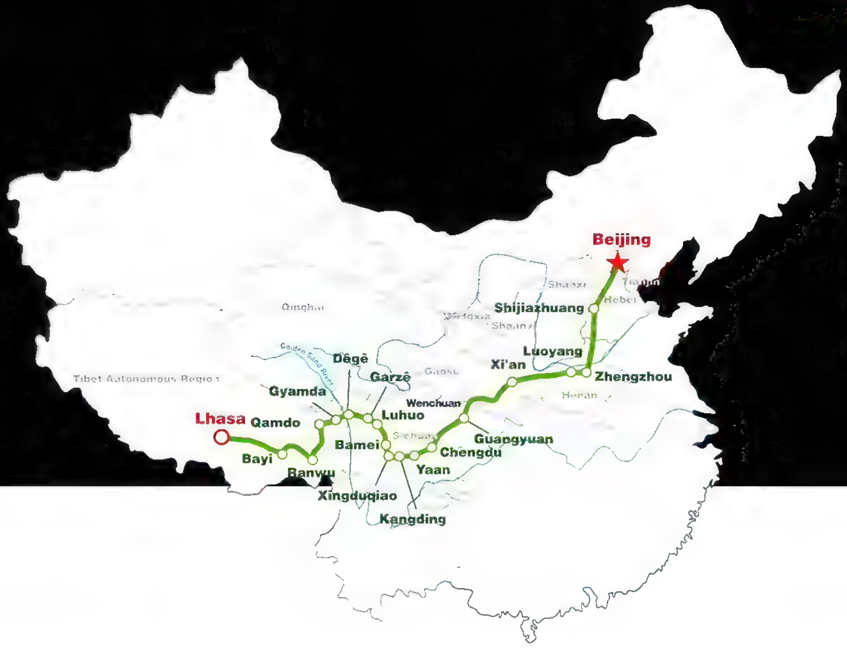
4. The romance of the Yunnan-Vietnam Railway can be tasted at the South Railway Station 1910 Restaurant.

5. The Xiang He Yun Guildhall provides modern Yunnan cuisines.

A Bittersweet Ride from Beijing to Lhasa

Photos & Article • Lao Zhang

It is usually a pleasure to be an amateur cyclist. But when cycling becomes a principal part of one's life, it can bring pain beyond imagination, but also a joy not found elsewhere and one you remember the most.


Beijing
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Shijiazhuang
Qinghai
Ningxia
Shaanxi
Luoyang
Xi'an
Zhengzhou
Golden Sand River
Dêgê
Gansu
Henan
Tibet Autonomous Region
Garzê
Gyamda
Wenchuan
Luhuo
Lhasa
Qamdo
Sichuan
Bamei
Guangyuan
Chengdu
Bayi
Yaan
Banwu
Xingduqiao
Kangding

Among the variety transport available for long distance touring in China, cycling is an 'alternative vogue'. So why did I choose to travel to Lhasa by bicycle? It was not due to any startling revelation; I just liked the idea and happened to have enough time to pursue it. From 6 June to 18 July 2005, I experienced a 'bittersweet bicycling tour' from Beijing to Lhasa for 43 days.

Cycling from Beijing to Chengdu

6 June I commenced my journey at Tian'anmen Square in the early morning, taking a memorial picture and left Beijing for Zhengzhou along National Highway 107 and from Zhengzhou to Xi'an along National Highway 310. Villages neighboured villages and cities bordered cities with a variety of vehicles rolling up and down the roads. It wasn't much of a pleasure to cycle among roaring motorcars and tractors, let alone to be overwhelmed by their exhaust fumes.

Beyond Luoyang, the traffic combined with the rising topography and made it more difficult to ride along the highways over hills and through valleys and I didn't feel the trip was worthwhile until I left Xi'an and cycled over the Qinling Mountains.

15 June It was 10 a.m. when I left the Xi'an Shuyuan Youth Hotel after a quick check of my physical fitness at a hospital. Over two hours later, I reached 'Fengyukou' on the National Highway 210, at the base of a pass into the Qinling Mountains. After some snacks, I began my climbing.

It was already 7:20 in the evening when I reached the top of Qinling Mountains (actually I confess that I pushed my bicycle over the last five kilometres as I just could not ride any further). The next day, I passed by two ridges, Yueheliang and Pingheliangding and arrived at Lianghe Town, Ningshan County in the evening. By then I could say that I'd really completed my trip 'over and through the Qinling Mountains'.

20 June I reached Chengdu. From here on, the truly hard cycling trip along the northern Sichuan-Tibetan route would begin.

Northern Sichuan-Tibetan Route

The Sichuan-Tibet Highway consists of the northern and southern routes. The northern starts from two directions: one from Chengdu, through Ya'an, Garzê Prefecture, Luhuo, Garzê and Dêgê, over through the Great Jinsha River Bridge and finally into Tibet. Within Tibet, it passes through Jomda County and Qamdo District before it reaches Bangda Township, where the northern and southern routes converge and extends towards Lhasa via Bomi and Bayi. This route totals 2,413 km long and is known as the 'Small Northern Line'. The other stretches northwards from Chengdu, departs from the National 213 at Wenchuan and reaches Lhasa through Shuajingsi, Markam and Qamdo; while the southern route sets off from Chengdu, passes through Ya'an and Garzê and then reaches Lhasa along the National Highway 317. Relatively speaking, the 'Small Northern Line' passes through more scenic areas of pasture, higher altitudes and fewer people and has high mountains and isolated valleys. It is generally know to cycling fans as the 'Northern Sichuan-Tibetan Route'.

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Climbing over Mt Zheduo

In spite of sufficient preparation, I still did not expect the challenges of the trip to come so soon.

25 June It was the third day after I set off from Chengdu. As it was planned, I would ride from Luding to Kangding to take a rest that day, climb through the Mt Zheduo pass at a 4,298-metre altitude the next day and stay at Xinduqiao that night. On the way, however, I suddenly changed my mind and decided to climb over Mt Zheduo within one day. Unexpectedly, the road began to rise soon after I departed Luding.

It is 50 km from Luding to Kangding and the hovering road through the mountain is 36.5 km from

1. A picture of my travelling companion 'Little Donkey' in front of the statue of Emperor Shi Huang of the Qin dynasty in Xi'an.

2. The starting point of my cycling journey, Tian'anmen Square, Beijing.

3. An old man I met going to market as I made my way to Guangyuan city in Sichuan.

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Kangding to the Mt Zheduo pass, with a vertical rise of 3,000 metres. At eight o'clock in the evening, I finally climbed up to the Mt Zheduo pass before the afterglow was completely gone. The evening scene was attractive, but I suffered a bad headache because of the altitude, so I raced down the mountain with haste wishing to descend to Xinduqiao which was at 3,300 metres, as I knew I would hardly get any sleep if I camped at any altitude above 3,500 metres due to altitude sickness.

However, the pain did not end that quickly. The blacktop road going down the mountain only lasted a mere 10 km and then became a rough track with stones and soil exposed on the surface. And it was completely dark by then.

Not until half past eleven that night and guided by a Tibetan who kept a small shop on the roadside did I arrive at a restaurant to find lodgings and I was still left with seven kilometres to Xinduqiao Town.

Yielding to the Temptation of Kind People

I may have suffered when I climbed over Mt Zheduo but I had overcome my fear of high mountains! Riding all the way from Xinduqiao and through the pass to Mt Xiangpi (at a 3,970-metre altitude), the Songlinkou Pass (at a 3,950-metre altitude), Luoguo Ridge (at a 4,100-metre altitude) and even the pass to Mt Que'er (at a 5,050-metre altitude), the highest place along the Sichuan-Tibetan route, I didn't feel that overwhelming pressure anymore. It was an exception at Mt Aila, nevertheless.

1 July Used to getting up early and starting my journey, I had already travelled 25 km from the Dêgê County seat by 7:30 a.m. and arrived at the Jinsha River that separated Sichuan and Tibet. Over the river, I saw the huge 'Tibetan rock' on the other bank that is well known in the area and beside the rock was Gamtog Village, the easternmost village in eastern Tibet.

Riding into the territory of the Tibetan Autonomy over the Great Jinsha River Bridge, I departed from the main stream and travelled upwards along its tributary valleys. Soon I would climb through the pass to Mt Aila and reach Jomda County, the first stop in the Tibetan section of my journey along the 'Northern Sichuan-Tibetan Route'.

Probably 'Aila' was a Chinese translation from Tibetan. Although the pass was somewhat lower at 4,245 metres, a rider still faced an enormous test as the road wandered through the mountains, rising 1,400 metres within 35 km. Different from the hovering road in Mt Zheduo, Mt Aila had only a few curves, but each was very long, with the last one being 10 km.

I never considered asking for a lift when I climbed over Mt Zheduo or Mt Que'er, but at Mt Aila I finally yielded to the temptation of kind people.

Hospitable Tibetans at Mt Segrila Pass

The seat of Pailung Township is a small village, with only 60 permanent residents. It is very famous because of its location at the entrance of the large curve of the Yarlung Zangbo River and adjacent to the 14 km long 'Highway of Natural Barrier'. There are three great natural barriers along the Northern Sichuan-Tibetan Route; the Mt Que'er Pass (with the highest altitude), the 72 Curves of the Nujiang River (with precipitous slopes and many curves) and the Pailung Natural Barrier.

The Pailung Natural Barrier refers to the 14 km long rocky earth road that wanders around the mountainsides and over the Great Tangmai Bridge. This road is located at a place where mud-rock flows, collapses and landslides occur frequently. The slopes are precipitous, the curves turn suddenly and the road surface is so narrow that one vehicle can only give way to another on some broader strips. In some sections, it is not an easy to just use local dirt and stone to repair the road after a landslide so people have to also set up a frame of logs and fill it with stones. Riding on such a 'highway', drivers have to be very cautious.

In comparison with Mt Que'er and the 72 Curves of the Nujiang River, the Pailung Natural Barrier, although only 14 km long is the most imposing. Bicycle riders do not need too broad a road surface of course, so they will feel much more relaxed when passing through some its complicated sections. If it is fine, it takes around two hours to travel through it. If it happens to be bad weather, a heavy rain for example, it is better wait patiently at the small town of Tangmai for a few days until the weather clears and it is confirmed that the Great Tangmai Bridge has been open to passage. If that happens, cycling may indeed be safer than driving or hitchhiking.

12 July I set off from the Pailung Township seat, together with Xiao Ge, a cyclist from Hunan whom I had met on the way. It was not until 9 o'clock in the evening that we climbed up the Mt Segrila Pass. Being told that it would take only one hour or so to descend we decided to take our time, stay overnight and take some pictures of the pass early the next morning. We asked some local people, who were selling the long inscriptive prayer streamers, if we could lodge in their tents. The several Tibetan lads were very enthusiastic, helping us to settle ourselves in a tent and then inviting us to tea and supper. They came from Nyemo County, about 150 km west of Lhasa, and stayed in the mountains from February to October every year, selling the streamers and some awetos to passengers.

The next morning, we offered to pay 20 yuan lodge fees before we departed but they refused firmly saying, 'glad that you could lodge here, but we are not hotelkeepers.' What simple words and what simple, kind people!

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Om Ma Ni Pe Me Hung

The six-word Mantra Om Ma Ni Pe Me Hung is probably the best-known symbol among the world's 'impressions of Tibet'! Tibetan Buddhism believes they are the true, fundamental words of the esoteric Padama sect that is, the true teaching preached by Guanyin, the fundamental goddess of this sect, therefore they are called the six-word Mantra. Regarding them as one of the most revered incantations, people have written, painted and sculpted them widely on mountains, buildings and

1. On the way to the Mt Que'er pass (5,050 metres above sea level), the highest point at the Sichuan-Tibet Route.

2. Tibetan nomadic people and the Tibetan mastiffs they raise in the Garze Pasture in Sichuan Province.

3. Climbing over Mt Aila on a curving road.

4. Kind hearted Tibetans selling prayer streamers at the Mt Segrila pass.

1. On a road submerged by a flood, one might fall down at any moment, together with the bicycle.

2. Without accident, I passed through the 14-km Pailung section known as the 'Devil's Road'.

3. At the bank of the Yarlung Zangbo River.

4. Some foreign cyclists I met at the Potala Palace in Lhasa.

religious vessels. And it was these six words that I happened to know before others which raised my interest in Tibet. In addition, in a movie known as *Himalaya* directed by Eric Valli, a French director, the six Mantra words are repeatedly chanted, calmly and melodiously in the snow-covered plateau, like sounds coming from heaven.

Passing by the Riguang Chain Bridge at Dongjug Township, I happened to see a small piece of pretty Mani stone at its end, on which the inscription of the six-word Mantra was written with a brush pen. I had a greedy impulse and took it, ramming it into my bag and expecting it bless my journey all the way.

Against my expectations however, from the time I carried this Mani stone various problems began to occur with my bicycle which had worked well through the previous 3,000 km trip from Beijing: three spokes and one rear ball bearing case broke into pieces.

13 July Arriving at Bayi Township, Nyingchi County, Xiao Ge stayed at the Bayi Township seat to wait for his friends with whom he had served in the army.

Arrival at Lhasa and Return to Mt Yela Pass

I never imagined at any time that I would reach the shrine city by hitchhiking! Alone again, I had planned to compress a three day journey into two days when I started from Gongbo'gyamda county seat (15 July), to climb over the Mt Mila Pass (5,013 metres altitude) on the first day and lodge at a highway maintenance station or the Maizhokunggar County seat and to arrive at Lhasa the next day. In this way, I could avoid lodging at the Songduo township seat for one night before I reached Mt Mila.

However, not everything goes according to plan. Reaching Jinda Township at 9 o'clock on the morning, my rear tyre gave out after a momentary 'ssh'. An examination revealed that the tread had worn out and thus the pneumatic tyre blew up. The Jinda township seat was still 80 km from the Mt Mila pass, and 230 km to Lhasa. It was not so bad, for there was a small lorry leaving for Lhasa and I came to an agreement with the driver. I paid 40 yuan and he took both me and my bicycle to Lhasa. And so, the excitement that would have come two days later, burst out in my chest ahead of time as the wheels of the small lorry began to roll.

'I think you'd better return to Songduo and ride over Mt Yela into Lhasa!'my friend Feiquan flatly stated after I met him in Lhasa. His words rekindled my enthusiasm to cycle again after losing it somewhat as the objective my trip, the Potala Palace had come into view from the truck.

He said 'there's just over 200 km left and it would be a little over 170 km if you start from Songduo in front of the Jinda township seat, climb over Mt Mila and reach Lhasa. You've ridden over 4,000 km anyhow, you may regret not finishing when you are so close!' Thinking it over, I agreed with his words. Could I end up with nothing to show for my efforts by taking a lorry into Lhasa after I'd experienced 40 days of hardship?

17 July In the afternoon, I started from Lhasa and climbed over Mt Yela once again by vehicle reaching the small Songduo Town in front of the Jinda township seat .

18 July At 10 o'clock in the morning, we climbed up to the Mt Mila pass in sequence. Standing at the pass below the waving prayer streamers, we could not see Lhasa but we saw the Lhasa River flowing below the mountain. On the way down and accompanied by the river which grew from a small stream to a dashing torrent, we finally saw the smile of Lhasa and reached the Potala Palace.

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Tips for Individual Bicyclists

- ◆ Travellers can find many restaurants operated by Sichuan people in the cities and towns along the way in Tibet, which offer relatively good board and lodging.
- ◆ It is necessary to take fruit and vegetables at times, such as tomatoes and bananas.
- ◆ Take a pack of white sugar in addition to some necessary medicine. Sometimes water mixed with white sugar will be the most magical 'energy drink' when you are exhausted.
- ◆ Travellers can have their bicycles repaired in Qamdo, Bomi, Bayi and some other places after they leave Chengdu, but remember that parts are not always available and the repairers may not be too skilful.
- ◆ The Tibetan children along the way from Xinduqiao in Sichuan to Lhasa are simple, naive and lovely; remember not to have any prejudice against them.
- ◆ The dogs in the Tibetan area love to pursue cyclists; if you are confident and strong enough you may be able to outpace them, if not, stop and confront them as they may be afraid of human beings.
- ◆ The distances, altitudes and other information in this article are from personal records and should be used for reference only.

Postscript

'How exhausting it would be! How could you choose cycling to Lhasa?' That was a question one driver asked me as I took some pictures on the bank of the Rawok Lake. 'We love cycling just as you like driving' was my reply. Stephane was a young Frenchman whom I met near the town gate of the Baxoi county seat when he had just drawn two large bags of water out of a stream. From France to China, Stephane had ridden over 10,000 km together with his girlfriend Sheri. And in front of the Potala Palace in Lhasa, I had met Ben Walkier and his wife coming from Britain.

We had spent different times, taken different routes and had different impressions, but we had the same feeling of joy. No matter what happens, pain is transient and a cyclist always gains more pleasure from the journey!

Translated by Huang Deyuan

Monkey Buskers

Memories of Tomorrow

Photos & Article • Ma Hongjie

A small population of monkey buskers live in Xinye County, southwest Henan Province. For centuries they have lived with the monkeys and busked their way around on vagabond trips. Like migratory birds, they travel all over the country just to make ends meet. Making a 'career' of walking in the sunset, do they have a tomorrow?

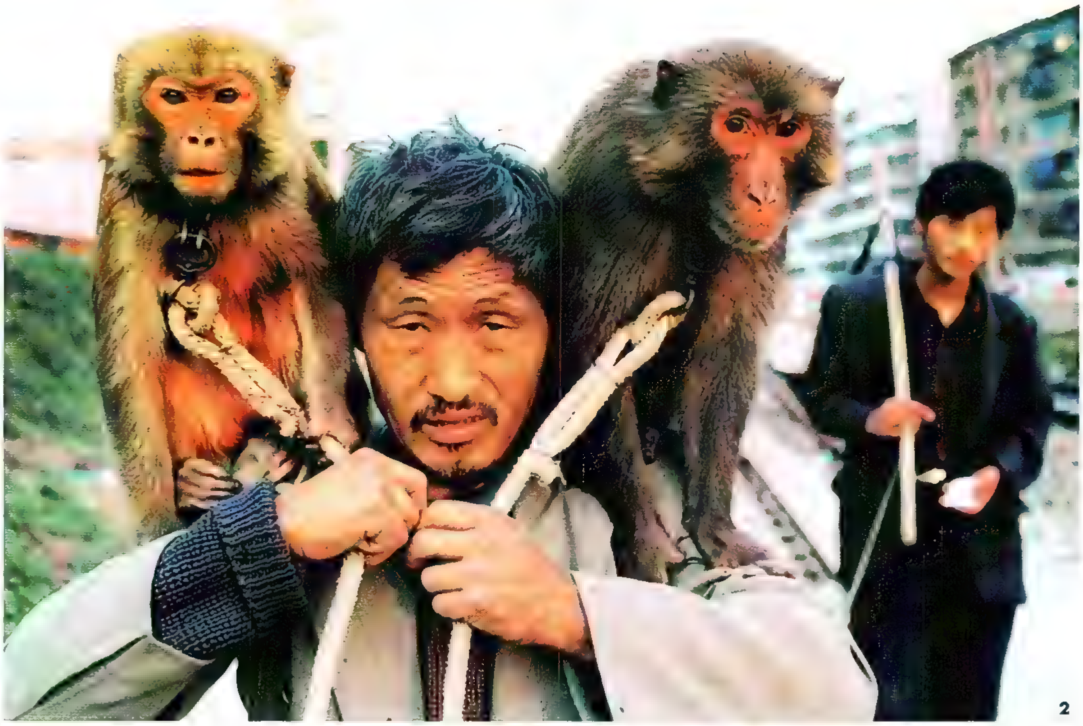
A few years ago I happened to hear of the anecdotes of the monkey buskers. I was enthralled and wanted to know more about them. For the next three years, I returned again and again to their world. I took pictures of them and wrote about their lives close up.

Incomplete statistics show that there are at least 2,000 monkey buskers in Xinye County, Henan Province. Having finished with the wheat harvests in June and October each year, throngs of monkey buskers leave one by one for the cities to busk with their monkeys. The third, sixth and ninth days of

1. The monkey buskers jump trains to go to cities for busking. The vagabond life is how they make ends meet.

2. After a performance, the monkeys perch and rest on the shoulders of their masters. They don't walk around.

3. Jumping a train is dangerous. Just one slip or a tiny mistake, and the train jumper will be handicapped for the rest of his life. In the worst case, he could lose his life.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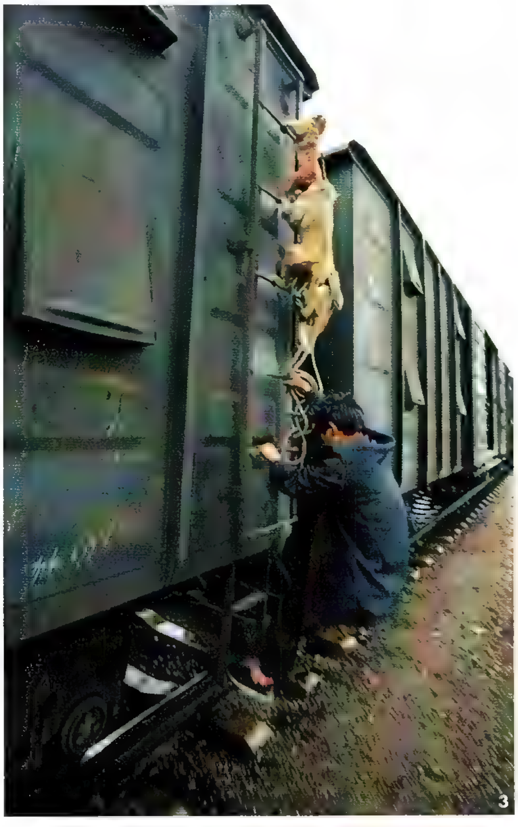
each month in the lunar calendar are auspicious days. On those days, there are times when hundreds of buskers set off. Most of them go to Xiangfan Train Station in Hubei Province, the nearest station to Xinye. If they can, they jump a freight train to ride for free to other parts of the country.

Free Transport Does Have a Cost

Usually in the winter they go to the warm southern provinces, Guangdong, Sichuan and Guangxi. Sometimes they go farther south over the border into Myanmar. In summer they go to cooler places like Northeast China, Inner Mongolia and Tibet. During their stowaway train rides, they suffer from hunger and extremes of temperature, jolting along day and at night in an uncovered car. In winter they endure temperatures lower than -10°C. In summer they are exposed to 40 to 50°C under the scorching sun. The longest journey takes seven days and nights, while the shortest takes three days and nights. Bottled tap-water and homemade steamed buns are all they have to stave off hunger and thirst. The monkeys have exactly the same food as their masters. To dodge the patrolling police at transit stations, they hide and stay quiet in the car. If they are caught, they will be either fined or thrown out of the train. Some have even been run over, caught under the wheels of the train when they slipped trying to flee the police. Some paid with their lives, while others have been left with life-long disabilities. A free ride to make a living can come at a high price.

At 1 p.m. on 30 October, an old monkey busker, Yang Lingui, followed by his 18-year-old son, three monkeys and a puppy, was ready to set off. Before they left, he followed the ancestral practice of presenting three joss sticks to the God of Fortune long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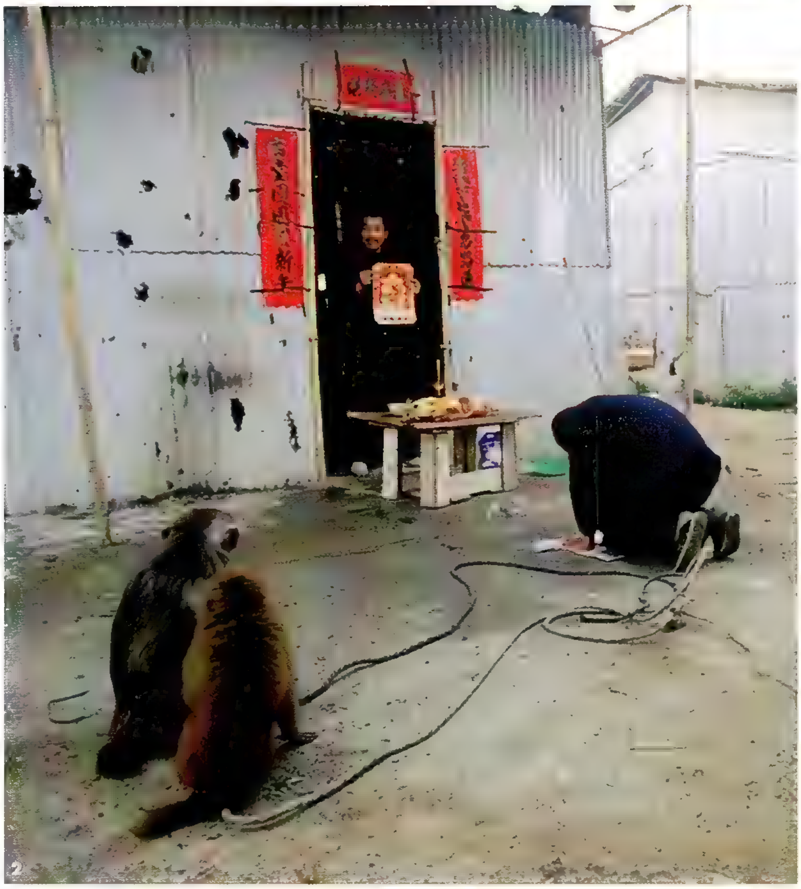

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worshipped in his family. He prayed for protection and safety of both man and monkey on the road. The monkey buskers in the village jointly rented a township shuttle bus to go to the seat of Xinye County, each paying a 2 yuan fare. At the county seat they changed to a long-distance coach. At about 4 p.m. they arrived at Xiangfan Train Marshalling Station in Hubei Province. They filled their plastic bottles with 10 kilolitres of tap water. They had brought homemade steamed buns with them. This would be their rations for the coming few days on the train.

By 5:50 p.m., it was getting dark. An electric locomotive shunted to a train of marshalled cars (a freight locomotive often pulls train cars to different destinations and these are marshalled at intersection stations leg by leg). Seeing it, Old Yang said, 'This train's going west. Quick! Let's go!' The 12 of us ran towards the train. At the front of a train car, Old Yang checked out the code that indicated its destination. He and his fellow stowaways climbed into the train cars, which would take them to different destinations. Some of them were headed to Hubei, others to Guangzhou. Old Yang and his troupe were headed for Chengdu, Sichuan Province. After I climbed into the car in a panic, I found the freight was large machinery parts. There was sitting-room only on both sides of the car and on some racks.

Roughing It for a Free Ride

I would take a sleeper on passenger trains when I went on fieldwork trips to take photos. It was the first time I had taken a freight train. The train rumbled off at high speed, stirring up strong speeds of seven to eight on the wind scale. Walking in the train car, I heard deafening metallic bangs. I sat on a shaking rack, worried about falling out at any time. Old Yang was calm, saying, 'It's alright. We've taken trains like this often.' The freight train we were in stopped frequently. Sometimes it stopped for one or two hours.

Two hours after the train had left Liuliping, it started to rain. Rainy days are the worst for monkey buskers. When it rains, the car is dripping wet. They cannot sleep on the floor. On 31 October, just before dawn, the train stopped in a tunnel at a small place called Huangcaogou. It turned from rain to a torrent. Old Yang had to wrap up the bedding and take out plastic film to cover us up. The monkeys tied to a corner of the car sneaked under the plastic cover. They did not want to get wet either. From this point onwards, the train ran through the high mountains of Hubei and Shaanxi provinces. When the speeding train passed through a tunnel, a strong back-wind would be generated. To avoid the cold and rain, the monkey buskers and I would sit on a quilt under the plastic cover. The back-wind in the tunnel extracted all warmth from the quilt and our bodies. We felt so cold

I later learned that the train would pass through some 480 tunnels from Xiangfan to Chengdu. As the trains run on a single pair of rails in this section, our freight train had to stop every now and then till the oncoming traffic had passed. After three days and nights, we eventually arrived at Chengdu Marshalling Station at 2 a.m. on 2 November. It was raining hard. Old Yang and I found a dry spot under the flyover. Old Yang spread the plastic film on the ground. Our party of eight spent the night there. For the sake of safety, Old Yang let me sleep in the middle, telling me to put my camera bag and cameras into their woven sack and sleep on it as a pillow. The monkeys and the puppy surrounded us like sentinels.

A Hard Day's Work — for Nothing

At 7:30 a.m. on 3 November, Old Yang and his troupe were ready to go busking. Each of them had brought 50 yuan with them from home. If they did not make money before the meagre amount in their pockets ran out, they would starve. They took a bus into downtown Chengdu to the city rim area. If they tried busking with their monkeys in the downtown area, there was a high chance of being caught by the police. When they took the bus, they put the monkeys into woven sacks in case they hurt or scared other passengers. When they got off, they would release the animals. The monkeys had been with their masters for years and understood them. They did not move or scream on the bus.

At about 9 a.m., they arrived at a development zone in Qingjiang Road. Without police or city administration staff in sight, Old Yang set up his performance stage and started the show. In a short while the monkey show had attracted a full circle of passers-by. The programmes included ball play, catching flying knives and fighting with the master. The fights were the most popular acts.

On this day they performed six shows. They called it a day at 5 p.m. Old Yang's son and younger brother collected money from the audience. When they got back to their sleeping place, they discovered a counterfeit 50 yuan note. They earned 92 yuan throughout the day. Putting the counterfeit note aside, they got 42 yuan. They collected a maximum of 2 yuan from people who watched the monkey show. If the viewer gave a large note they had to give back change. In the end, they had lost 6 yuan. Old Yang chided his son and younger brother for being careless. It was not the first time that they had collected counterfeit notes. The monkey busking troupe was in low spirits.

Dinner was ready. Old Yang snatched a bowl, squatted by the makeshift hut, and started eating. Surprisingly, his male monkey grabbed a stone and threw it at the rice pot. He spilled the rice and dishes on the ground. Only then did Old Yang and his troupe members realise they had forgotten to feed the monkeys first. The usual practice was that the first bowl of rice should be given to the monkeys after a day's

1. Tired, the monkey busker curls up on a flat surface and slept. This is the life of a monkey busker.

2. Before setting off, Old Yang with his monkeys kneeled and kowtowed to the God of Fortune, praying piously for protection and safety on the road.

3. Old Yang kept his hard-earned money safe by stuffing it into steam buns.

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work. It was a reward for their hard work during the day. The monkeys had become used to this treatment after years of busking. When they saw the master have his food first, they got angry. That evening Old Yang did not sleep well. He kept thinking of home.

Monkeys as Children

In fact, the monkey buskers loved their animal partners. Though they were critical of the monkeys during their daily drilling, they took care of the monkeys in the same way they did their families. Men and animals stayed together all the time and shared all things. They even put sugar candy into the tea for the monkeys. Sugar candy is a good thirst quencher, removes inner heat and replenishes energy.

The wife of Huang Aiqing, a fellow villager of Old Yang, was an expert in raising monkeys. One time when a baby monkey had lost its mother, she had felt sorry for the baby monkey and fed it from her own breast. It became a habit that the baby monkey sneaked into her bed for milk every night. Such anecdotes are not uncommon in the monkey-busking families. Their feelings for their monkeys are similar, if not exactly the same as, their feelings for family.

At 6 a.m. on 6 November, I parted with Old Yang. He and his troupe went on their way, busking from place to place. I learned later that they were away from home for 75 days on this trip. Old Yang said that if men and monkeys were all safe and sound, the trip was good.

Grim Future for Monkey Buskers

I had asked Old Yang, why he had chosen this unusual way of life. He replied, 'Farming year-long, I have just enough to feed my family. Working elsewhere, I often don't get pay. I don't have start-up money for a small business. Monkey busking is an old trade passed down from my ancestors. If I earn a penny, I get a penny in the pocket — nobody will delay my pay. The future? Ah, the future isn't good, of course. This trade… I think… will end with me.' Old Yang's son had told him that he was going to go south to work. He didn't want to make a living putting on monkey shows. Old Yang had no objection. He knew his son would not have a future if he went on with monkey busking. Old Yang and his peers in the monkey busking trade were clear that the fate of their sons should not be tied to the monkeys.

Translated by Zhang Boli

1. Old Yang's life moved at an even faster pace than that of the model on the billboard. The monkey buskers stayed just a few days in a city. They are forever passers-by in the cities.

2. Fighting with the monkey was part of the show. The more the audience reacted, the better the show.

3. At dusk, the best way to relieve fatigue was a soak in the river. What weighed on Old Yang was more than two monkeys.

Aged over 70, Yang Luoshu is the father figure of the Yangjiabu Chinese New Year painting. Thousands of paintings have b [illegible]

Yangjiabu—The Home of Chinese New Year Paintings

Photos & Article • Xie Guanghui

Yangjiabu, a village in Weifang, Shandong Province, is famous for its Chinese New Year paintings. Created using wood block printing, the paintings are popular with locals and foreigners alike, such is the masterly skill and dedication of the wood block carvers. Even today, Chinese New Year paintings still have an important role to play in modern society.

The history of Chinese New Year paintings stretches back more than 2,000 years. Its origins lie in the poor housing conditions people had to endure in ancient times, when their homes were besieged by bugs, snakes and other creepy-crawlies. To keep these nasties away, people put their faith in the 'Door Guardian'. It was hoped that these door gods would keep evil at bay and offer safety to the family living within their protection.

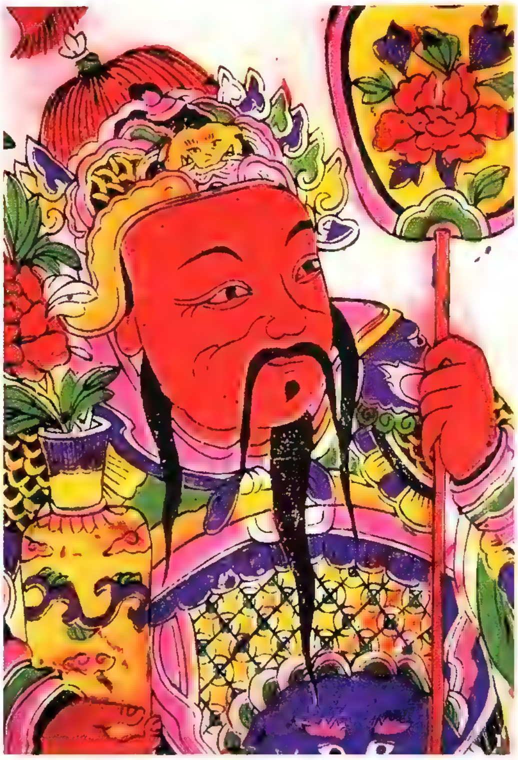
Zhong Kui : The Original Poor God

Today, the most familiar Door Guardians is Zhong Kui. An ugly-looking man with large, blazing eyes and a stiff, bushy beard, Zhong Kui is believed to date from the early Tang dynasty (617—907). Legend has it that the seventh Tang emperor, Li Longji, was suffering a prolonged illness. One day he dreamed of two demons, one big and one small. The small demon stole his jade flute and the scent pouch of his favourite concubine Yang Yuhuan, then fled. The large demon followed in hot pursuit, caught the smaller demon, and swallowed him. 'Who are you?' the emperor asked. The large daemon answered, 'Zhong Kui. I've just performed an exorcism on you.'

With that, the emperor woke up. Miraculously, he was no longer sick. He summoned a painter, Wu Daozi, and ordered him to make a painting based on the dream. And this is how Zhong Kui became a Door Guardian at the royal palace.

Gradually, the story and the likeness of Zhong Kui reached the everyday people outside the palace. Soon enough, everyone was putting up paintings of Zhong Kui, especially at Chinese New Year, as a form of protection.

Yangjiabu paintings are mainly sold in rural areas where economic conditions are difficult. The paintings are created by applying multiple layers of coloured wood block printing on the same sheet. They are rarely drawn by hand. Yangjiabu paintings are printed by six wooden blocks: black, red, green, yellow, purple and light colour.These contrasting colours create a feeling of warmth, freshness and excitement. The mixture of colours and the design also convey a feeling or rural simplicity, matching the psychological and emotional mood of the Spring Festival perfectly.



Yang Luoshu – The Father Figure

Yangjiabu Village is home to more than 1,000 people, many of them highly adept at the skills required to produce Chinese New Year paintings. The oldest artisan in the village is Yang Luoshu. Aged 70 yet still strong and sprightly, his home is a living museum of Chinese New Year painting production. Logs are stacked in the courtyard, ready to be carved into wood blocks. Bright and spacious rooms house the painting shop, the warehouse and the printing room. The painting shop, which has existed for more than 200 years and is called Tong Shunde, is like a gallery of Chinese New Year paintings through the ages. But old or new, all the paintings give off a distinctive scent of ink.

Old Yang has never had any formal painting training, and not much schooling either, come to that. To design a block, he uses willow charcoal to make a rough drawing. Once happy with his design, he goes over the outline with a traditional brush and ink. This he calls his 'sketch', a design that incorporates many elements of traditional Chinese painting. Yang does not work in three dimensions — his design is flat, on a plane. He prefers to work this way as it makes it easy to change his design if he wants to.

A Meticulous Process

Once the sketch is done, Yang begins to carve the wood. He reproduces his final design on a piece of paper, which is then placed on top of the wood to be carved. Now he can begin. But carving a wood block does not simply mean following the design slavishly to recreate every line and curve. Each block is an original creation. The carver must make the most of his knife and the wood, eliminating parts of the design that will not work and embellishing his carving when his knife can be more artistic than the brush and ink. Yang explains that the difference between painting the design and carving the wood is like the difference between making a rubbing of calligraphy carved in stone, and producing brushstroke calligraphy.

Yang goes through each stage of the carving with painstaking care. He uses pear wood for the blocks because of its delicate yet hardwearing texture. In addition, pear wood does not contain small veins and has the least shape variance when soaked in water — it is best kind of wood for wood block printing.

The old man is short and has huge, almost deformed knuckles. Despite his age, his eyes are sharp eyes and his hands firm. He makes each cut in the wood with supreme confidence. And it's an unforgiving business. One slip, and he has to start all over again. Yang follows a set pattern for each block by carving the most important features first and the least important features last. For example, if he were to carve a person, he would work on the head first, then the hands and legs, and finally the torso. If he is carving a head, he begins with the eyes, nose, mouth and eyebrows and finishes with the hair.

Tiger Taboo

Last year, Yang carved a set of the 108 heroes from the classic Song dynasty novel *Outlaws of the Marshes*. Based on my rough calculation, in one

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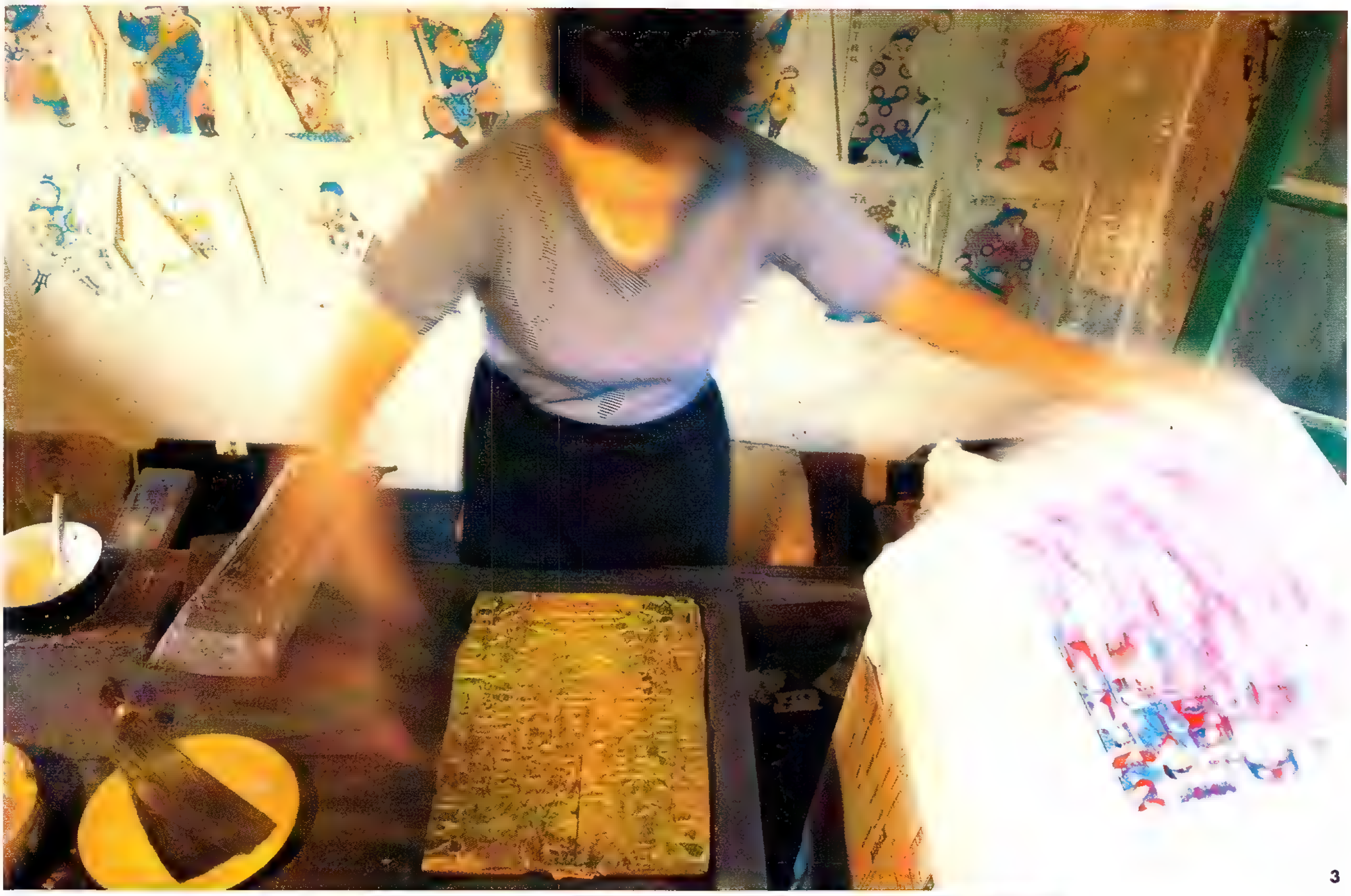
1. The origin of the Chinese New Year painting is the 'Door Guardian', a legend that dates back over 2,000 years. (by Li Zemin)

2. In rural areas, Chinese New Year paintings are stuck on the walls in each and every household. They add to the joy of the Spring Festival. (by Shan Xiaogang)

3. Printing is an important part of the Yangjiabu Chinese New Year painting. A good printer can print hundreds of quality paintings a day.

4. Despite his age, Yang Luoshu has sharp eyes and firm hands. Each cut in the block is made with supreme confidence. Last year, he carved 500 to 600 blocks.

5. Wood block carving is a complicated and painstaking process. Each artisan that puts tool to wood contributes to the trade and helps invigorate the art form.



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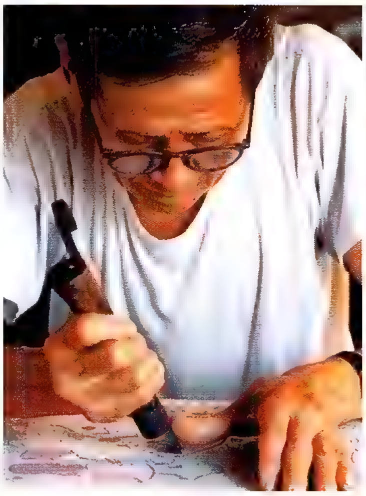

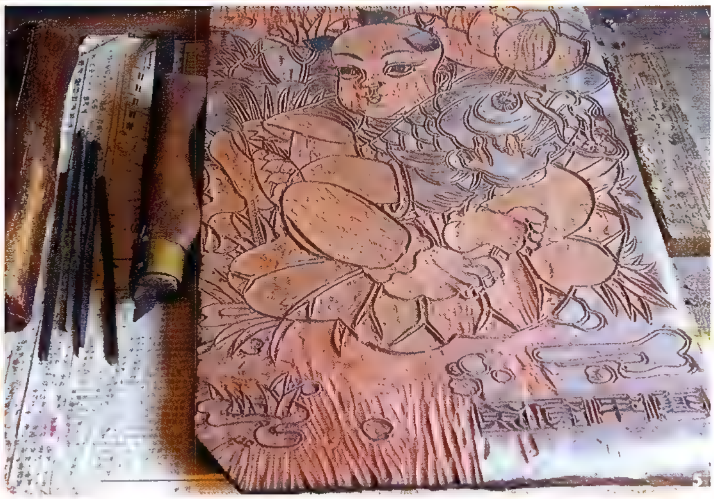

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year, the old man carved 500 to six 600 blocks. Currently he is carving blocks for another classic novel, *Journey to the West*, which he will produce in the form of a picture-story book. He plans to make 80 paintings for the book and will need to carve 400 or more blocks.

Yangjiabu Chinese New Year paintings are printed on rough-edged rice paper. Yang is to busy with his carving to do any of the printing, so he has hired a woman to do this for him. According to Yang, a good printer can produce hundreds of quality paintings each day.

Business these past few years has been good. Each year he uses 100 cartons of paper, each carton containing 100 sheets and each sheet big enough for three to four paintings. This means the shop sells at least 30,000 Chinese New Year paintings a year. The total sales volume for Yangjiabu Chinese New Year paintings is 10 million. Most of the people who buy Yangjiabu Chinese New Year paintings are farmers from the Yimeng mountainous area of Shandong province, the remainder being foreign tourists and the odd wholesaler.

Translated by Zhang Boli

Days in Hoh Xil

Photos & Article • Luo Jian

1

After passing through Kunlun Mountains, I arrived at Hoh Xil (or Kekexili) of 4.5 million sq km which is the world's third largest and China's biggest land without human inhabitants. Hoh Xil became famous because it is the home for tens of thousands of Tibetan antelopes. The Chinese movie *Kekexili* also makes the story of the protectors of the antelopes known to every family.

The four nature reserve stations lies in a southward straight line along the Qinghai-Tibet Highway. They were established by the Nature Reserve Bureau in 1999 to curb illegal hunting of antelopes. Nevertheless, they serve more than that purpose today...

An Average Temperature of -10°C

In June 2006, I visited Budongquan (Never Frozen Spring) which is 20 km from Kunlun Mountain guards the first entry point of the north gate of Hoh Xil. The spring was given the name because of its never cooling spring eye. No landmark can be found in the area except the spring. The area is the nearest stopping point to the Golmud nature reserve station, still with a distance of 180 km from Hoh Xil. The relief drastically rise from 2,800 ~ 4,600 metres above sea level.

The Manager of Budongquan Station is Mr Zhan Jianglong, a Tiebtan in his forties whose home is in Golmud. Mr. Zhan, together with his three colleagues, resides in the area remote from the outside world. They use stove fire to keep themselves warm in winters of an average temperature of -10°C. Two hours of TV is the greatest enjoyment they can ever have in such a place.

Refreshment in a Monotonous Life

Having worked here for eight years, Mr. Zhan is an eyewitness to how Hoh Xil have became known to the outside world in recent years. Even though Hoh Xil became a national nature reserve, the Bureau at that time only had a rented place as its office in the area. A year later, to enhance the management of the area, The Forestry Security branch of the State Forestry

Bureau launched the largest scale anti-illegal-hunting operation in Chinese history codenamed Hoh Xil Number One. It was a very strong warning to the illegal hunters. In the same year, nature reserve stations were established along the Qinghai-Tibet Highway.

The Budongquan Station built in March 1999 is the first tent nature reserve station of Hoh Xil. Mr. Zhan spent six months there during its construction and was then transferred to the older Wudaoliang Station. In 2003, he came to the Duoduo River Station and moved to the Suonandajie Station the next year. In July 2005, he entered the hinterland and stayed in the Zhounai Lake Station which is a temporarily set up in the reproduction season of Tibetan antelopes every year. In September, he was transferred again to the Budongquan Station built of bricks and earth. In Hoh Xil, nearly all rangers were transferred to different stations from time to time as a new environment would ease their boredom of their monotonous life in such a remote area.

During the period, the management of Hoh Xil by the base has reached a stage of established protocol. With the publicity campaigns on conservation and legal issues to the nomads and tourists, even the illegal hunters no longer came into physical conflicts with the rangers like barbarians. In 2001, Mr. Zhan and his fellows were patrolling the mountain area, they encountered six illegal hunters who had just gunned down more than seven hundred Tibetan antelopes. The hunters did not attempt to resist arrest after the rangers warned them by firing at the sky. As the Bureau's control over the area has been strengthened, the violent behaviours of illegal hunters like those on the movie rarely occur again.

Trivial Jobs in Addition

The emphasis of Mr. Zhan and his fellows' job is still to monitor the land of no human settlements regularly. Long periods of repeated tasks in the area equips the rangers with some execptional skills. For example, predicting the time of the next rain by observing a cloud, identifying Tibetan antelopes and Mongolian gazelle from miles away while driving on the highway and even telling whether there are any intruders from the traces of car wheels. They have become a part of Hoh Xil.

From 2004 onwards, the rangers also have to keep an eye on the possible outbreak of a bird flu epidemic in the area. In fact, what takes up most of their working hours are some even more petty tasks. As a little solitary station on the Qinghai-Tibet Highway, the rangers also have to provide food and accommodation to travellers and help out them in case of vehicle breakdown. They also have to a ride to those hitchhiking railway workers. The few rooms in the station are usually occupied by volunteers and media workers. The control room is often packed with railway workers who came to watch TV programmes on the only television set in the whole area.

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Pleateau Covered by Cellphone Network

The Suonandajie Station at 40 km south of Budongquan, the Wudaoliang Station of 40 km further south and the Duoduo Station of 100 km further south are always committed to the protection of Hoh Xil and inevitably take up the extra duties on the Qinghai-Tibetan Highway. In late June 2006, this solitary area without any cellphones has been covered by the telephone radio network due to the launch of the Qinghai-Tibetan railway. To a certain extent, the rangers finally no longer have to be separated from the outside world.

Besides Mr. Zhan and his fellows, in 2006, Hoh Xil also lived 50,000 Tibetan antelopes and over one million other wild creatures and she temporarily accommodated forbidden hunters and illegal gold rushers in the hinterland, the Qinghai-Tibetan Railway workers and employees of service industries on the Highway and many travellers along the route. The bustles of visitors add colours to the monotonous life of the rangers. However, this also possesses a threat to the solitary area under the Railway. Mr. Zhang knows that it is not a good sign but can do nothing about it. All he can to do is trave back and forth along the Highway and mourn at the rapidly growing traffic on the two sides. Or stop their car, have a look at the Hoh Xil mountain afar from where their faith comes.

Translated by Ezekiel Pang

1. Zhan Jianglong patrols the solitary area alone.

2. Tibetan antelopes in the solitary area. Due to frequent disturbances by human intruders, wild creatures are used to being on alert.

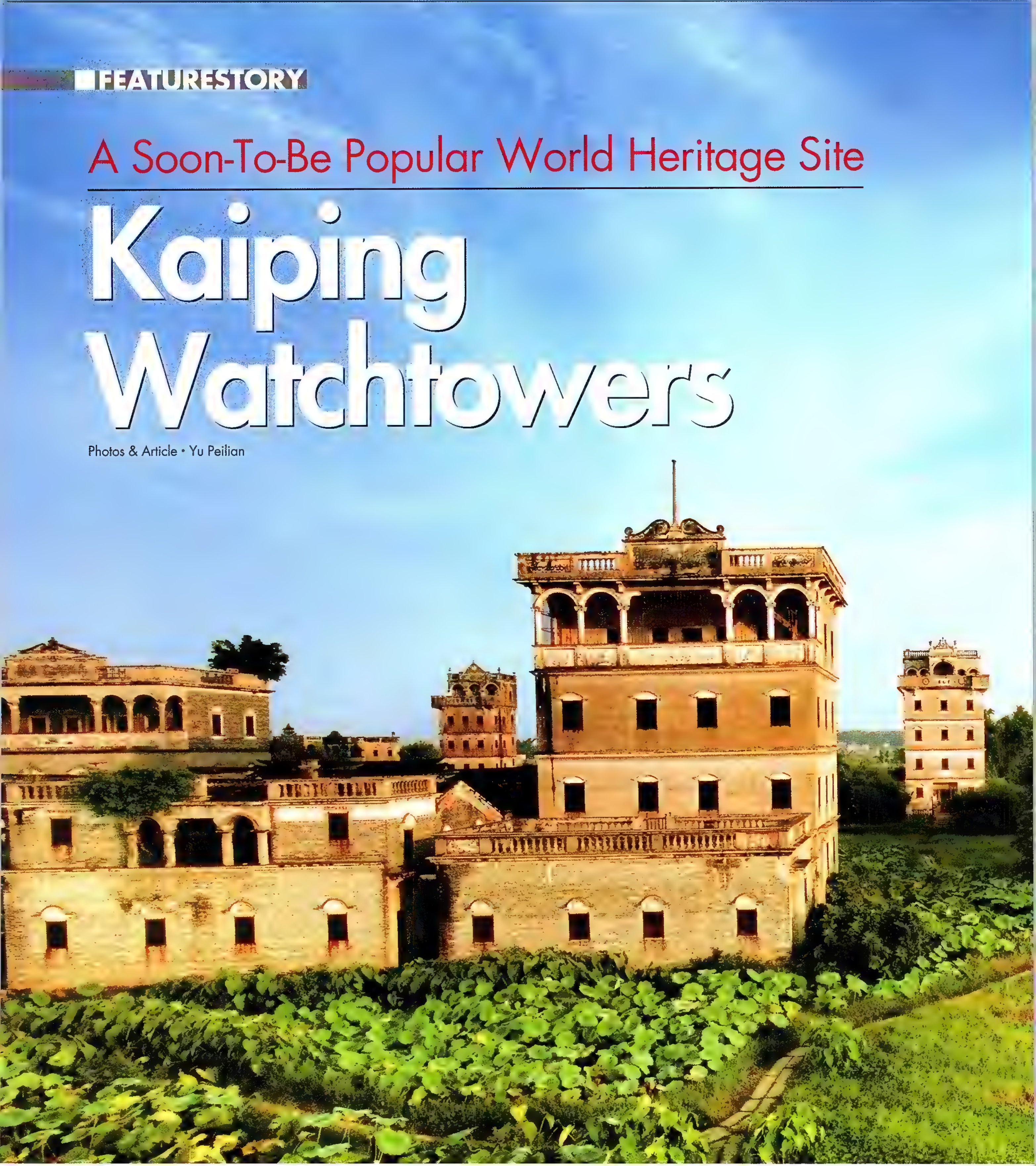
3. Workers are contructing the extension of the oldest Wudaoliang Station.

4. Every time on the highway, you can see cars packed with hitchiking railway workers.

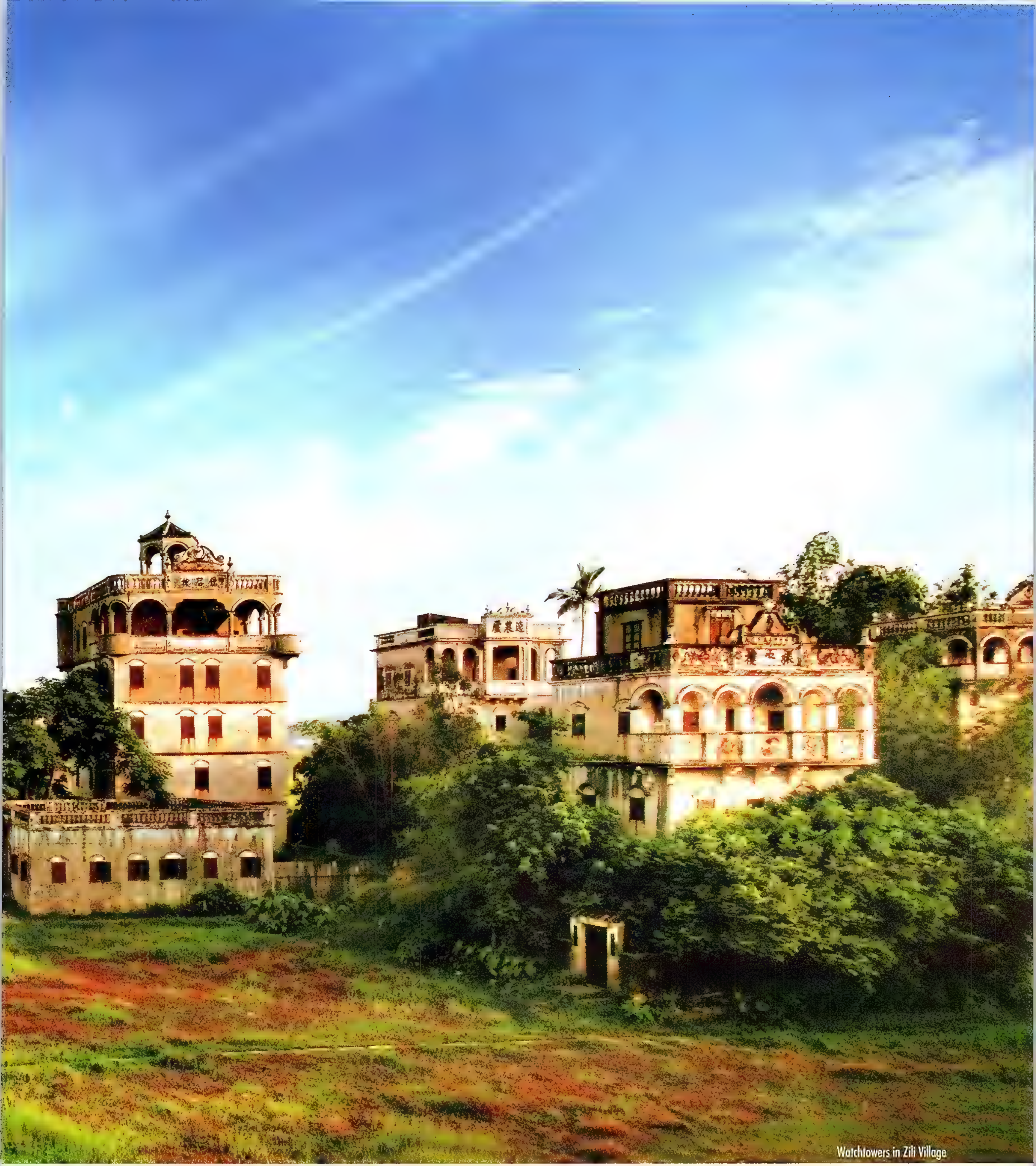
A Soon-To-Be Popular World Heritage Site

Kaiping Watchtowers

Photos & Article • Yu Peilian



Kaiping was once considered a remote place in South China's Guangdong Province where bandits abounded and life was difficult. Such security problems led the expatriate Chinese living in Kaiping to erect solid, thick-walled watchtowers (or *diaolou*). Over time, a complex of watchtowers in a combination of Chinese and Western styles was gradually formed. Thus Kaiping, whose name implies 'development and pacification', attempted to



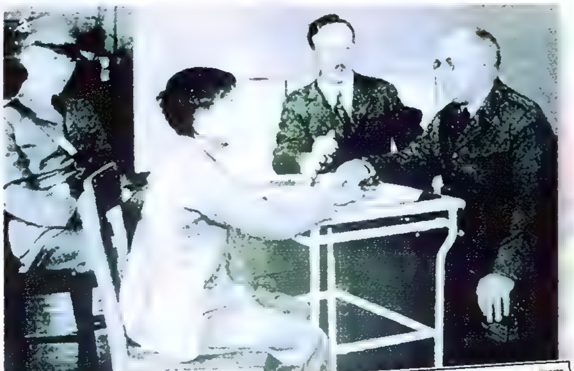
Watchtowers in Zili Village

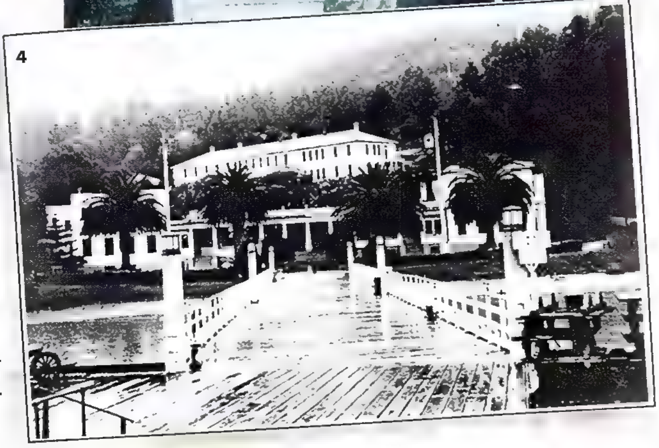
reclaim its right to safety. Today 1,833 remain in existence. This landscape of watchtowers is not only unique in Guangdong but throughout China.

Since 2001 China has nominated Kaiping and its unique watchtowers and villages to become a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site. So far it is the only application submitted by Guangdong Province.

The Rise of Kaiping Watchtowers

To earn a better living, many Kaiping residents left their hometown to go abroad in search of jobs. They worked hard overseas and remitted money home to build houses. To guard against the bandits, they built impregnable watchtowers with thick walls and small windows.





1. Chinese people were sold and shipped to America as slave labourers in the mid 20th century.

2. Hundreds of thousands of Chinese workers were detained on arrival in America until officials confirmed their identities.

3. A Chinese person being questioned by US immigrant officials.

4. After their arrival at San Francisco, Chinese labourers were taken into custody on Angel Island, where they often stayed for weeks or months.

5. The history of the Kaiping watchtowers is tied in with the overseas Chinese.

6. A severely dented copper gong used to sound the alarm.

In fact, the history of the Kaiping watchtowers is closely related to that of expatriate Chinese.

The name of Xie Shede from Tangkou, Kaiping, is clearly marked in the records. He was sold in Hong Kong to Americans as a slave labourer in 1839, an event which marked the beginning of Kaiping's connection with America.

Following the Opium War in 1840, the waning power of the Qing government, the armed feudal fights between the local and Hakka people, and other social turbulence made life difficult for Kaiping people. At that time some Western countries such as the U.S.A., Canada and Australia were recruiting workers from China's coastal areas to work in gold mines and construct railroads in their own countries. A large number of Kaiping people took this opportunity to leave their hometowns and work overseas.

The early expatriate Chinese labourers experienced unimaginable hardships. Although the conditions were inhumane, they hung on, saving their hard-earned money to remit home. They hoped their families could buy farmland or other properties and enjoy a better life. Thus, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Kaiping became a place where 'people dressed warmly and ate their fill' thanks to a large number of remittances. But consequently, it also became a 'gold mine' in the eyes of the bandits, who continuously raided and kidnapped and left plenty of tragedy behind.

During the 14 years between 1912 (the first year of the Republic of China) and 1926, bandits looted schools eight times and kidnapped more than 100 teachers and students. In December 1922, the Kaiping Middle School in Chikan was raided but thanks to the searchlights on the watchtowers in Yingcun Village, the bandits were rounded up quickly and the schoolmaster and 17 teachers and students were released. This event sent a shockwave throughout the county, and the overseas Chinese were delighted with the part that the watchtowers had played in crime prevention.

Each town and village with watchtowers organized themselves into local militia to keep watch at night. As soon as bandits were seen, the watchmen would beat the gongs as 'escape' signals and everyone would make a hasty retreat into the watchtowers. In fact, the beating of the gongs sounded as frequently as meals were eaten and life was rarely easy.

7. An alarm to warn off the bandits.

8. Cartoons reflected the anti-Chinese phenomena of the times.

9. A diary that tells the reasons for building the watchtowers.

10. Resident ID certificates were issued by the Philippine government to Chinese families.

11. Tools brought back by expatriate Chinese indicate the type of work they were engaged in overseas.

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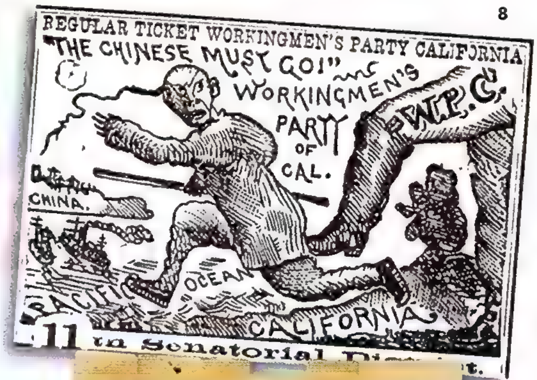
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REGULAR TICKET WORKINGMEN'S PARTY CALIFORNIA
"THE CHINESE MUST GO!"
WORKINGMEN'S PARTY OF CAL.
W.P.C.
CHINA.
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CALIFORNIA
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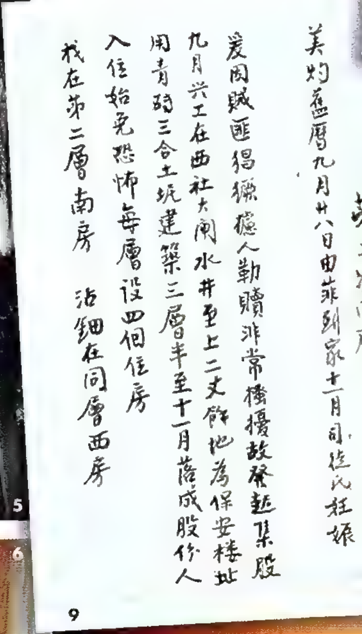
第二次回唐

美灼舊曆九月廿八日由菲到家十一月同佐氏狂娘

爰因賊匪猖獗擄人勒贖非常擾攘故發起集股

九月兴工在西社大閘水井至上二丈餘地爲保安樓址

用青磚三合土坑建築三層半至十一月落成股份人

入住始免恐怖每層設四個住房

我在第二層南房　治鈿在同層西房

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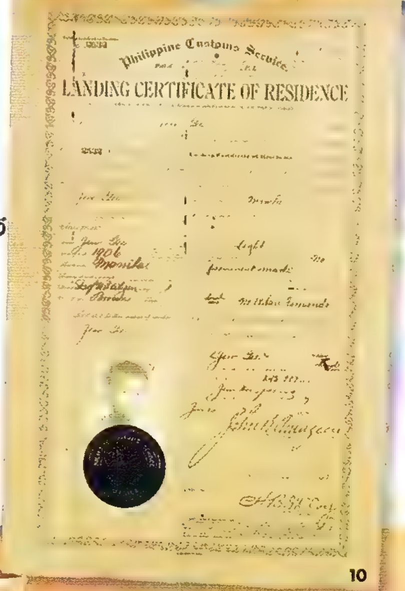
Philippine Customs Service

LANDING CERTIFICATE OF RESIDENCE

1906 Manila

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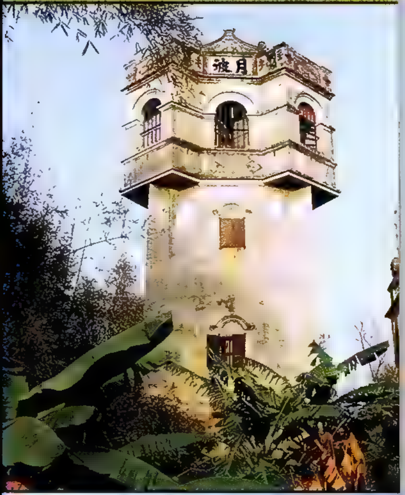
The finely built and uniquely styled watchtowers are wonders of historical architecture.



A Close-up of Watchtowers

Throughout Kaiping's downtown and countryside, the varying sizes and exquisite details of the numerous bewildering watchtowers tell tales of their owner's lifestyles to those who pass by.

Watchtowers in Kaiping date back 300 to 400 years, with the last one being built in 1948. The majority were constructed between the 1920s to 1930s. Most of Kaiping's numerous watchtowers, remarkable for their foreign-styled architecture, were built of cement.

Stylish Watchtower Roofs

The lofty watchtowers have the most extraordinary roofs, including some unusual domes, arches and columns. They are often mixed and integrated, with columns supporting arches and arches supporting domes. These styles are mostly seen among the watchtowers and residential architecture in Kaiping.

According to the Kaiping County Literature, there are more than 100 decorative architectural styles of watchtower roofs, among which 10 types are most popular and typical: Chinese, Sino-western, ancient Roman, European, 16th-century British, German castle, Turkish Islamic, American or European cottage, courtyard and church style.

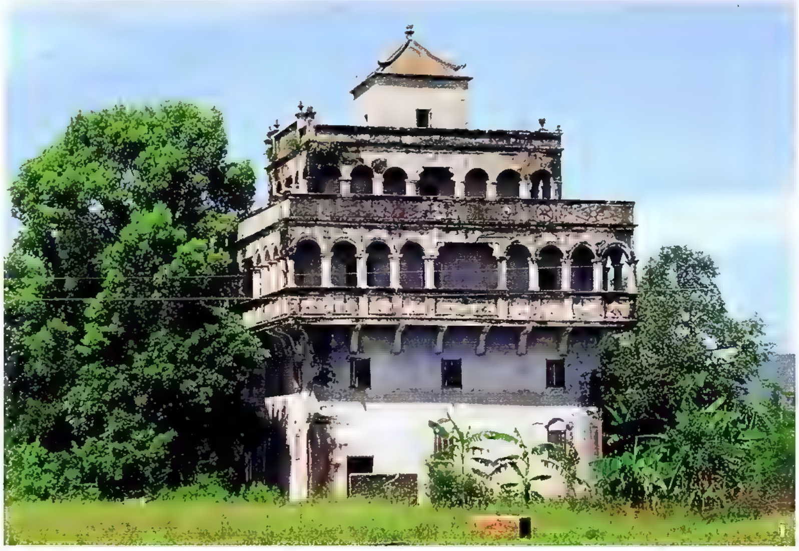
The top, or capital, of the watchtower and civil residence columns are often beautifully styled. Imitating Greek columns, they taper off slightly at the top. Some are decorated with friezes, while others have flutes — grooved lines from top to bottom. The capitals often resemble Greek Ionic scroll designs or the more exquisite Corinthian style flowers, some in multiple layers extending outwards. Several rings, each a bit smaller than the one below, are 'stacked' around the square or round bases.

Arches have been incorporated into architecture since Roman times but the Kaiping watchtowers make extraordinary use of them. The Ruishi (Auspicious Stone) Building in Jinjiangli, Xiangang, [ref. Location map on p. 135] for example, has some 28 arches on its eighth storey. Each of the four corners of this storey have a pill box, or sentry post, though they are almost completely blocked.

This building's Roman dome was constructed in concrete slabs, a method that had in earlier days been a rather complicated engineering feat. The Byzantine vault roof over a round attic on the ninth storey makes it the tallest watchtower in Kaiping. With four small domes complementing the bigger one, it presents a magnificent view from a distance. Besides having about 90 windows, this building also has around 32 Roman columns.

Similar to the Ruishi, the Shilu Building in the Xiabian Village, Baihe Town, has a huge vault roof with four accompanying pill boxes on its corners. In addition, each small dome has a ball-like finial, making the building resemble a castle in Europe's Middle Ages — noble and imposing.

In comparison, the Baoshu Building at Tanxi, Tangkou Town, which is also the Ancestral Temple of the Xie family, has a parabolic major dome on a rectangular base structure. The roofs of each of the four pill boxes on the corners are also parabolic in style, deemed Islamic style by some experts. Such special structures are characteristic in Kaiping yet at the same time unique in watchtower construction.



1. The Yanping Building in Baihe Town.

Types of Watchtowers

There are mainly three types of watchtowers: (1) Zhong Lou (shared buildings) are buildings that served as a shelter, which villagers would enter whenever danger occurred. These types of watchtowers are large in number, and solid and practical but not so attractive; (2) Geng Lou (sentry buildings) are usually built on higher land and equipped with searchlights. During the watchtowers' peak times, villagers would be organized into small gun-carrying militia to watch for bandits. From on high, they struck copper gongs, sounding the alarm at the first sign of danger so that the villagers could flee quickly; and (3) Yang Lou/ Lou Zai Wu (Western buildings) are fortress-style houses built by some well-off, overseas Chinese families. They objected to hiding in a zhong lou so they built houses which both served as a residence and a fortress. These houses usually had solid iron doors, windows and gates, and pill boxes with embrasures on the roofs.

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The people of all six villages of Xiangang Town — Shigang, Hengshi, Ju'an, Haisha, Rulai and Houbei — are surnamed Zhou or Huang. On a small hill surrounded by the six villages stands the three-storey Middle Building. The concrete columns around the building's dome now show more of their reinforced iron bars than the cement that used to cover them. From a distance, the dome appears to float casually in the air like a UFO.

Exquisite Friezes and Murals

The sculpted friezes of the Kaiping watchtowers are a good match, in technical quality and exquisiteness, for these buildings' other types of artistic decoration. This unique folk art is a must-see for visitors to the watchtowers.

Friezes and murals can be found almost everywhere there are watchtowers. None of the people who created these artistic works had received fine arts training; in fact most were just ordinary 'countrymen' using basic tools. The lime paste used for the sculptures was made by mixing some rice flour or yukou paper paste and dyes and other materials in a special stone mortar to create a fine, sticky paste. The craftsmen used iron wires or bars, bamboo strips or straw to create the bas-like reliefs. Sometimes moulds were used for the decorations at the top of the columns.

Murals are just as common a decoration in the Kaiping watchtowers and civil residences. Just like friezes, they also depict popular folk topics. The artistic styles vary from simple colourless drawings to heavily colourful paintings.

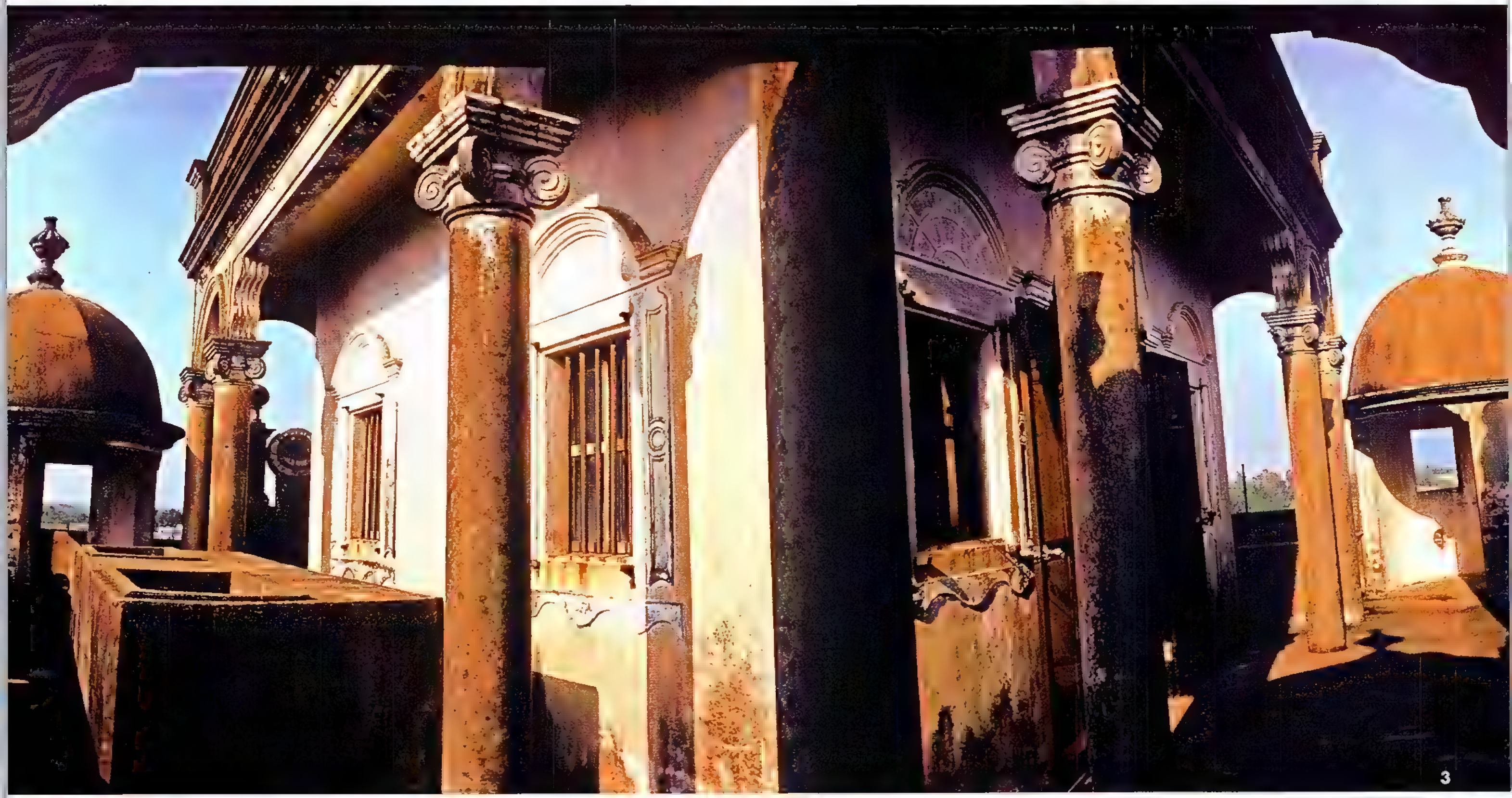
Most topics focus on auspicious events and celebrations. However, some depict very modern and abstract things, such as foreign-style buildings, engine-driven ships, airplanes and trains which were rather in vogue at that time. Others are relevant more to later times. There are also some bold designs such as clocks and poker, of which there are unlimited themes.

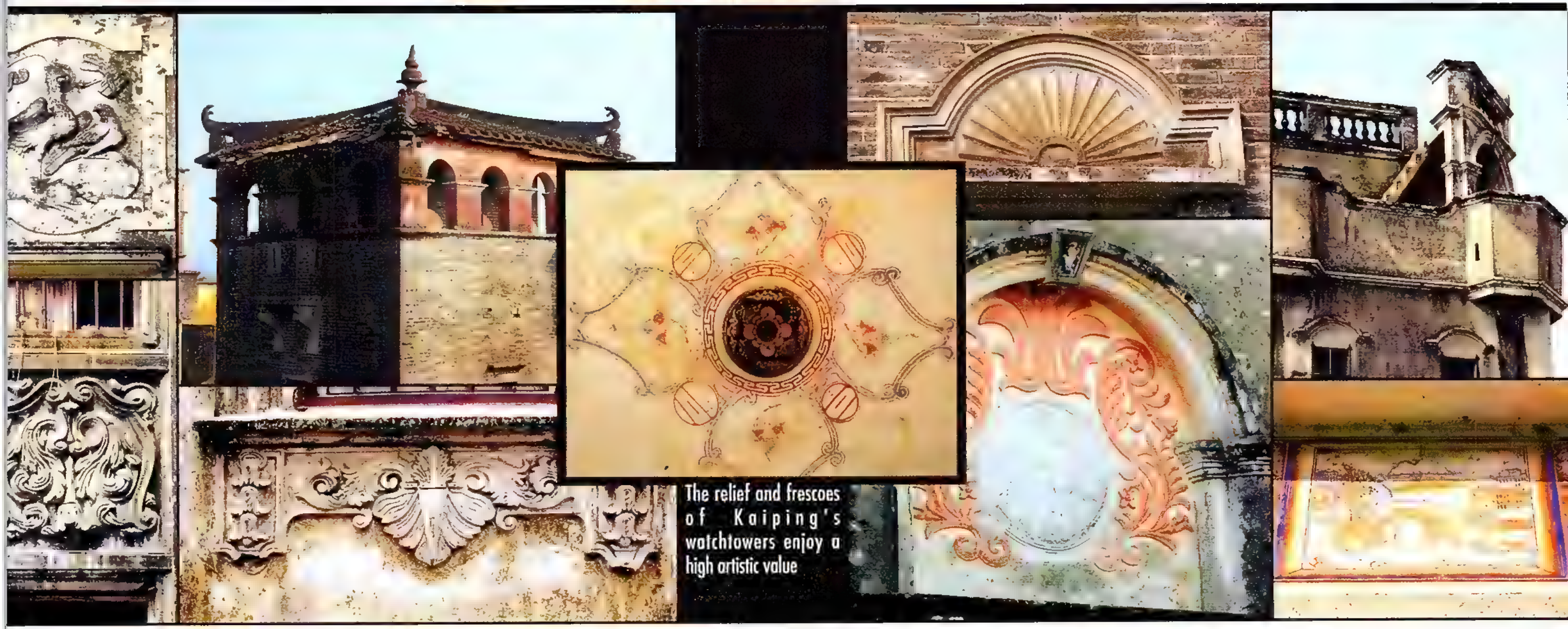
Translated by Huang Deyuan

1. A complex of watchtowers in Jinjiangli, Xiangang Town.

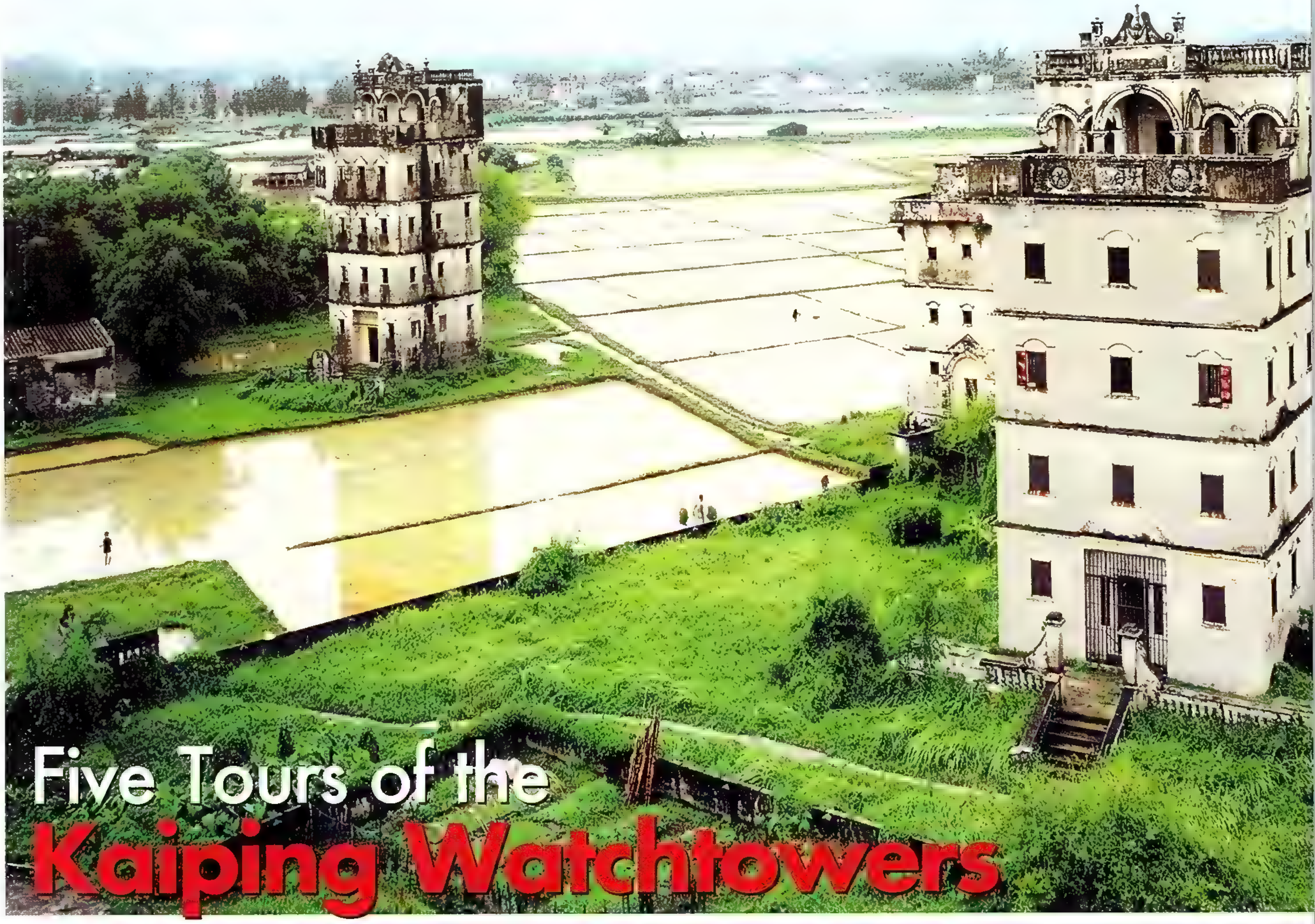
2. One of many outstanding watchtowers that show a distinctive mix of Chinese and Western styles.

3. The most marvellous parts of the watchtowers are their top floors, which invariably include Roman columns, vault pavilions, and sculptures over the window frames.





The relief and frescoes of Kaiping's watchtowers enjoy a high artistic value



Five Tours of the Kaiping Watchtowers

1. Zili Village demonstrates its unique characters as a hometown of expatriate Chinese.

2. Such Western-style pavilions are found in Guangdong's rural area.

3. The exhibition of expatriate Chinese history in Zili Village.

Watchtowers are widely scattered in Kaiping, Guangdong Province. Some of the villages most famous for such buildings — Sanmenli, Zili, Maxianglong and Jinjiang — have applied to be listed as sites of World Cultural Heritage. In addition, Dengbian Village (also known as Ghost Village), Yinglong Tower and Xiacun (also known as Canadian Village), as well as Liyuan Garden, are also attracting visitors to their characteristic watchtowers.

Zili Village located in Tangkou Town, is composed of the three natural villages inhabited by people surnamed Fang — Anheli (popularly known as Litouzui), He'anli (known as New Village) and Yong'anli (known as Huangniling, or Yellow Mud Ridge). Litouzui, or Coulter Mouth, established as a village in 1837 during the reign of Qing Emperor Daoguang, is the oldest among them. It was so named due to its topography. The first group of Yong'anli's villagers moved in from Huangcun, which is currently under the administration of the Shengping Villagers' Committee. He'anli was founded in 1905, the 3lst year of the Qing Emperor Guangxu. During the late years of the Qing dynasty, Litouzui Ferry, claiming to be one of the county's 10 major ferries, was opened. The three villages were merged into one with the name Zili (meaning to rely one's own hard work to make a living) during the Land Reform Movement following the founding of the People's Republic of China. The village now has 63 households and 175 residents. In addition, 248 overseas Chinese from this village are now living in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Malaysia, the Philippines, Fiji, and Hong Kong and Macau, with most of them being involved

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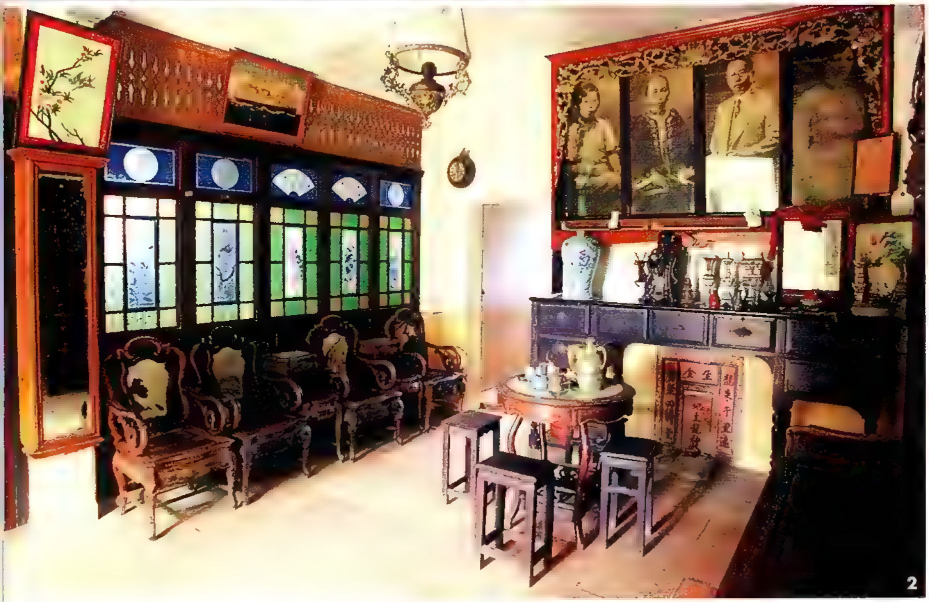

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1. Despite the vicissitudes of a century, these watchtowers still stand.

2. The photos of Fang Runwen and his three wives on the living room wall of Mingshi Building.

3. Zili Village on a spring morning.

4. The roof of the Cloud Fancy Building.

5. Portraits of Fang Wenxian and his wife, owners of the Cloud Fancy Building.

6. A ticket for sailing from Hong Kong to San Francisco via Yokohama.

7. A cute little piano of that time.

in restaurant, garment-making, laundry and grocery businesses.

A Typical Overseas Chinese Village

Among the watchtower houses built in Zili by returned overseas Chinese, 15 are well preserved. In terms of architecture, these buildings reflect the styles of the countries in which their owners once lived but at the same time they have traditional Chinese characteristic blended in. The building materials were imported from abroad. Their walls were built with poured concrete and on the various surfaces traditional carvings had been added. With a huge framework covering the whole construction site, the technique applied was advanced at that time.

There is a museum housed in a three-room residential house, entitled 'A Century in Retrospection: History of Overseas Chinese from Kaiping'. In the limited space of this traditional house, traces of the past century are exhibited through real articles, such as the images of the gods, Earth, Heaven and Fire Oven, that the residents once worshipped, the canteen established during the Big Leap period in the 1960s, and the regulations for the people's commune written on the walls.

Meanwhile, the photos displayed on the walls give a wider vision. Their contents include social reflections of the Qing-dynasty Guangdong, people going overseas in groups, those who stepped onto the Angel Island in San Francisco, Chinese working on the construction of the Pacific Railway....

In a small glass box, a piece of yellowish paper is on exhibit. Looking closer, one can see its English words. This is a duplicate of a 1923 ticket for sailing from Hong Kong to San Francisco, U.S.A., via Yokohama, Japan.

The Magnificent Mingshi Building

Mingshi Building is the tallest and most gorgeous house in Zili Village. The front wall of this five-storey building is decorated with numerous carvings and on its roof there is a small pavilion. Calligraphy or paintings of plum blossoms, orchids, bamboo, chrysanthemums, birds and insects, each signed by the artist, are etched on the blue glass screens that stand on each side of its ground floor living room. The table and chairs are classic and the brick floor is painted red. On the wall facing the door are four huge photos of Fang Runwen, the original owner of the property, and his three wives. Amazingly, one of the ladies was a Westerner.

Many visitors concentrate their attention on the photos of the master and his wives. At that time, it was legal for a Chinese man to have more than one wife. In this case, they might have lived in different places or not been his wives all at the same time. The number of wives, however, would demonstrate a man's social status.

These and many other old photos were contributed by Fang Runwen's descendents to the government, along with the house. Fang was a well-educated man. He loved stone carvings, photography and painting, and enjoyed taking pictures with his family and friends. After he died in the United States, his descendents followed his request to the letter — to carry him in a glass coffin and bury him in his native place — where his body and soul could rest in peace.

The Story of the Cloud Fancy Building

Another building, named Yunhuan (Cloud Fancy), is also a must for visitors to Zili Village, due to its cultural atmosphere and the unusual

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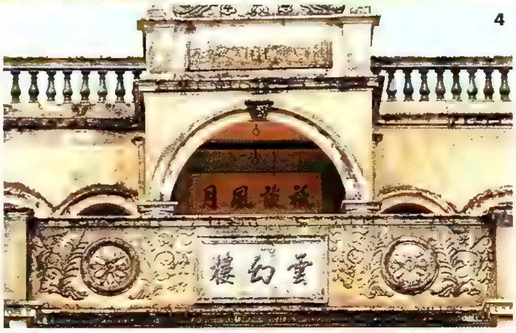
experiences of his owners.

Standing by the small pond in front of the Mingshi Building, you can easily see the Cloud Fancy Building with a horizontal tblet inscribed with the words 'Talking Nothing but the Wind and Moon' (祇談風月). It seems clear that the owner was a romantic man!

In fact, Fang Wenxian, the master of the house and a private school teacher, did not live a romantic life in his early years. In poor health, he was unable to work in the fields and lived on the rice his students paid as tuition. Three years after he married Guan Fengdi, who had bound feet, they had three sons and the burden on his shoulders became even heavier. To support the family, he tried to raise a sow at home but, being so weak, he couldn't even lift the fodder so he had to feed it on his knees. Still, the family was so poor that every time his mother-in-law would visit, his wife had to borrow clothes to present herself nicely and borrow rice to cook a decent meal.

Seeing no hope in his native land, Fang Wenxian decided to go to the Philippines to make a living. He worked hard and opened a trading company there selling all kinds of groceries. His business expanded eventually due to his smart management and he became a rich man.

Now the first thing Fang Wenxian had in mind was to buy his wife a house in Hong Kong, as she had been complaining about the troubles caused by flooding and bandits in their home village. For a woman with bound feet, life was especially hard in the countryside. She refused, however, to move to Hong Kong and insisted that they should build a big house in the village. Fang had no choice but to let her go ahead. At the same time he warned her that she might be poor after such a house was built. And so, Yunhuan Building came into being.



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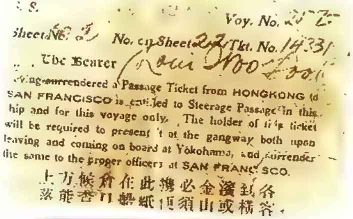
This five-storey house is surrounded by a large piece of land and concrete walls. An array of steps lead to its front door and musical note decorations on either side link to the handrails. Fang Wenxian worked painstakingly on the design and construction of his house, creating a characteristic elegant style. He imported all building materials from abroad, except for sand and stone. On the roof, you can still see the concrete barrels of those days.

Zili Village has been listed as a national Famous Historical and Cultural Village. Its villagers are now mostly involved in the business of selling local products or serving farmers' meals, which are also appreciated by visitors.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The Bearer Loui Woo

having surrendered a Passage Ticket from HONGKONG to SAN FRANCISCO is entitled to Steerage Passage in this ship and for this voyage only. The holder of this ticket will be required to present it at the gangway both upon leaving and coming on board at Yokohama, and surrender the same to the proper officers at SAN FRANCISCO.

各客到橫濱或金山必須攜帶此紙在船存口候查方能上落

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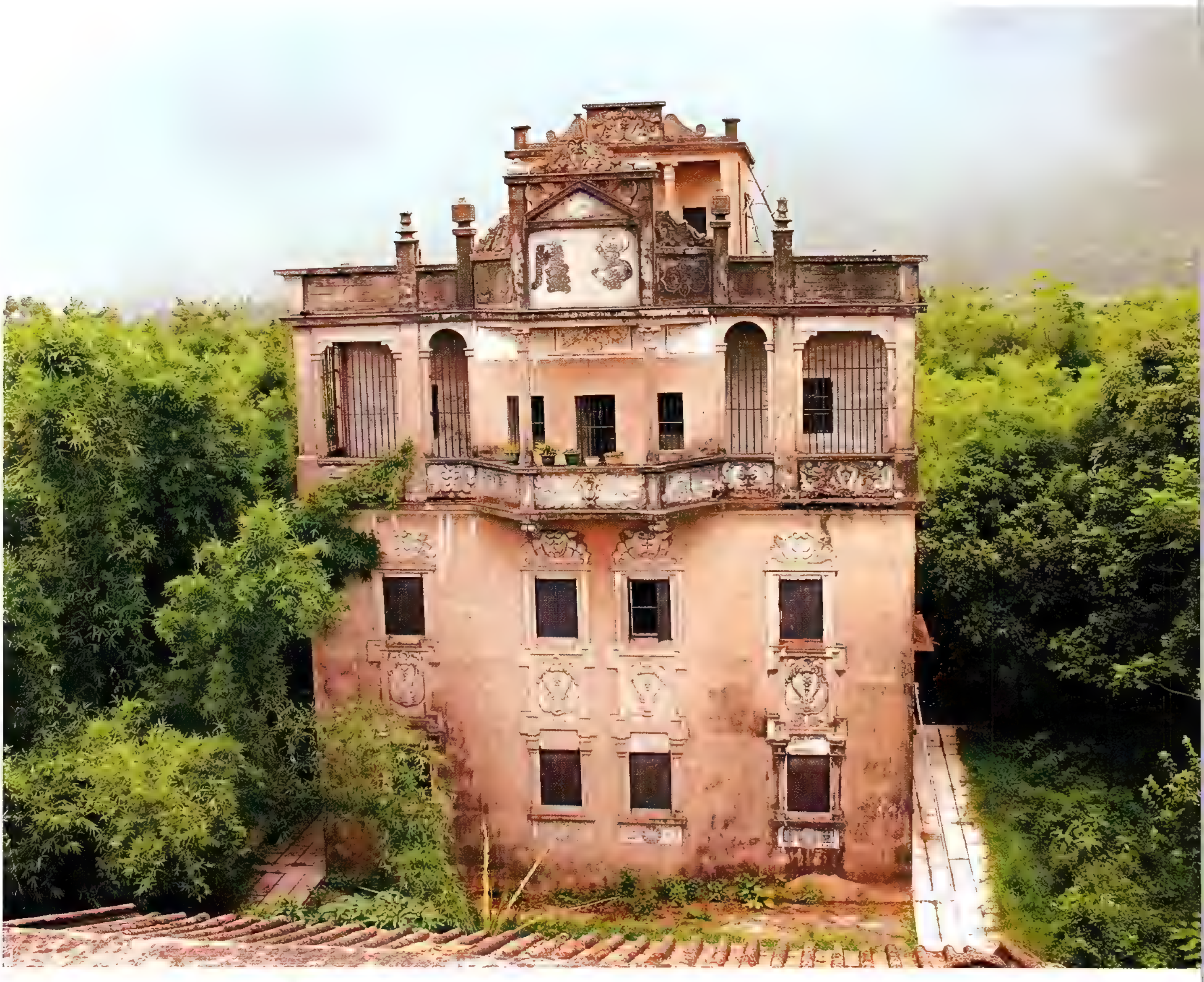


Maxianglong Village

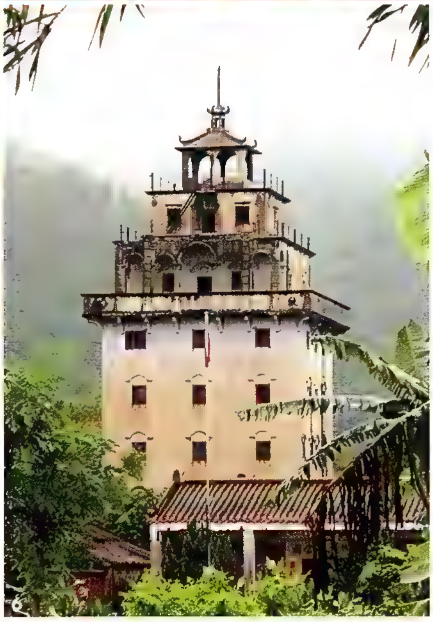
This house, with a name literally meaning 'Horse Controlling Dragon', is located in Baihe Town. The clear Tanjiang River runs in front of it; on the opposite bank is the Baihe Market. Residents of this village are of either the Huang or Guan clans.

Maxianglong is a wonderful ecological place. With its back to the Baizu (Hundred Feet) Hill, it faces the Tanjiang River. Going upstream, there is Enping; sailing downstream, there is the port town of Sanbu. The village is surrounded by bamboo groves and trees, and its roads are all lined with mellow grasses. This is one of Kaiping's watchtower sites nominated for recognition as a World Cultural Heritage. The distinctive houses in Maxianglong include Tianlu Building, Junlu, Linlu, Xinlu, Bao'an Building, Minlu, Hedong Building, etc. There are two Zhage buildings from the Qing dynasty in Qinglinli, one of the subsidiary villages. On 2 February this year, Maxianglong was opened to the public as a tourist spot.

Tianlu Building, a Stronghold

The eight-storey Tianlu Building is a typical watchtower shared by more than one family. Four concrete walls surround the house and engraved steel panels on its front gates add to the house's imposing quality. Stepping up the staircase, you'll see the small rooms on both sides of the corridor, some having the occupants' names written on the walls. Their doors are locked, but by peeping in through the cracks, you can see the items in use of days gone by. In the rooms open to visitors, one can see how the villagers would have lived through the arrangements of the furniture and daily utilities, such as the table, chairs and teapot.

Climbing up to the roof, you'll see the characters



1. Maxianglong lies in the middle of quiet bamboo groves.

2. A picture of Zhanglu taken on the day it was finished.

3. An inside view of one of the watchtower houses.

4. Exquisite carvings on the window frames.

5. As most people have moved away, even falling star fruits are neglected.

6. Tianlu Building, the representative structure of Maxianglong Village.

'Tian Lu Lou' (天祿樓) as well as have a pleasant view of the surrounding area. To maintain its original look, repairs have not been done on this building but to prevent people stepping on the spine, wire netting has been placed around it.

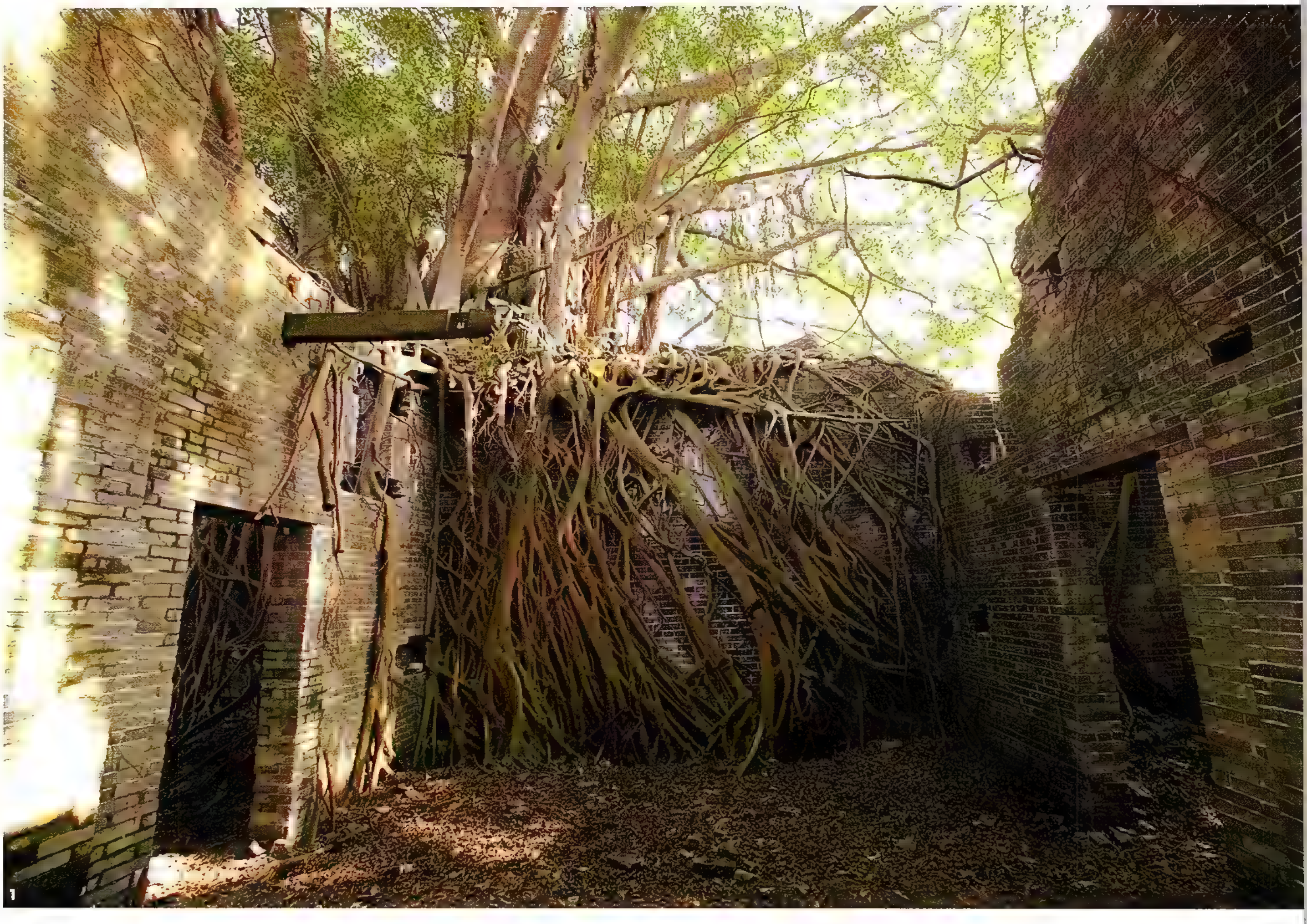
On the top of Baizu Hill, which extends several dozen kilometres, there is the tomb where Wen Tianxiang's clothes and hat are buried. The watchtowers and other houses of Maxianglong sit amid a vast sea of bamboo groves, where, when a breeze passes, green waves surge. The downstream scenery is equally attractive, inspiring your imagination.

Entering the front gate, you see several walls of gray bricks. The houses of Junlu, Linlu and others are all furnished in their original look. Many of the visitors believe that the classic wooden chairs, the concrete barrels, in addition to the numerous jars, bowls and chopsticks realistically demonstrate the real lives of the expatriate Chinese of that time. Some of them even comment that Junlu's front gate lock is much better than today's famous brand, Heaven and Earth.

English Words in the Local Dialect

Following a bluestone-paved trail through the bamboo groves you reach the Baozhang (Protection) Building, which was for the guards' night duty. Also in the watchtower style, it is short but attractive. Of the several watchtowers like this in Maxianglong, one has used English to mark the date of construction.

About a century ago, the people of Kaiping began to absorb English into their local dialect. Today, an old lady here may use English for certain items, such as stamp, can, and mug. When talking about a pretty girl, the locals would say 'she is nice'; young people refer to basketball or football games as 'beating ball'; a bench member is called 'spare'; to make a telephone call is 'to call someone'; and they use the same word for 'change'.



Dengbian Village

– the Ghost Village

This village is not at all related to any ghost as its name would suggest. Its real name is Dengbian, but is also popularly known as No Man's Village. It's not far from Sanbu and Xinchangwei, about 600 ~ 700 metres further into the area administered by Zhongshan City. About a kilometre along a concrete road, you'll see the village amid luxuriant trees.

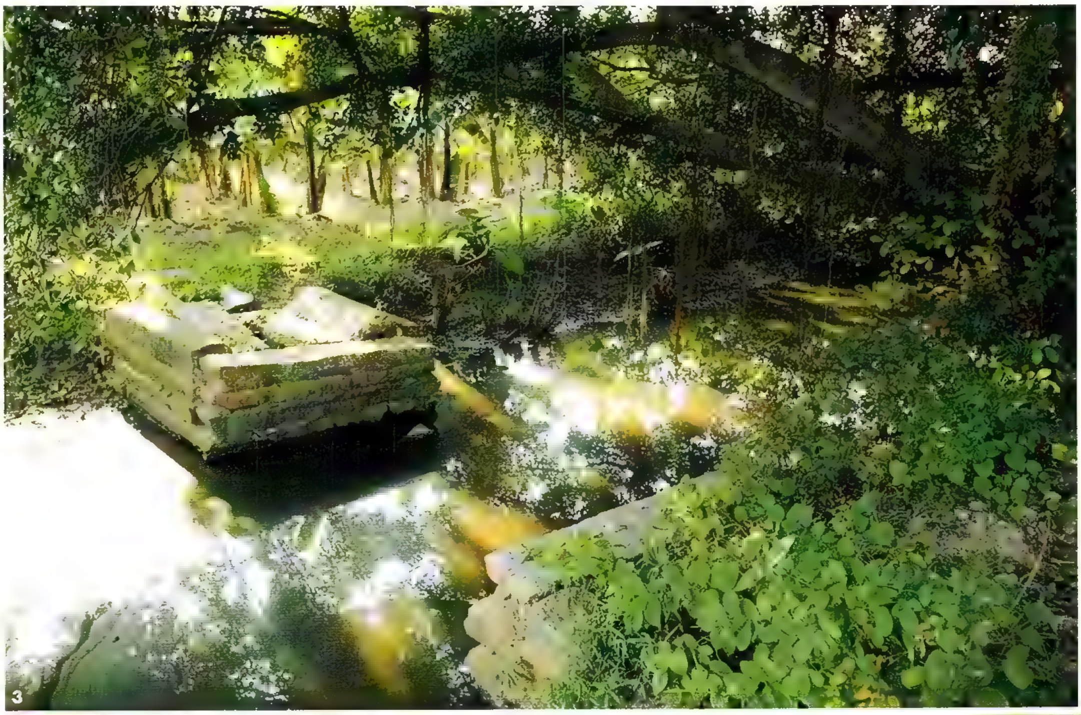
At the entrance to Dengbian Village there is a huge pond and a creek that runs through the village. Keep on the road to reach the Ziguang (Purple Light) Study. The layout of the village reflects the geomantic belief of people in southern Guangdong and still today, people enter the village via its back entrance.

A Giant Tree Swallows a House

The crunching sounds breaks the eerie silence as you walk the trails blanketed by leaves dropped by the numerous trees. In the wind, the branches wave and rustle, revealing a thrilling glimpse of an old grey brick house. The view inside the house is even more shocking! A giant banyan tree grows on the roof of the house and its numerous roots, like octopus legs, have taken over a great part of the roof. Looking up from the living room, you can imagine being in a rain forest. The tree roots reach the ground, following the walls and cover one of them completely. As growth continues, some of the thick roots turn into trunks with new roots stretching out. The cooker has been swallowed up already and the roots are advancing towards the door. Obviously, nothing can stop them.

How long has it taken to destroy a house like this? An award certificate stuck on the wall of the inner room dated December 1993 indicates that at least at that time people were living in this house. So the changes took place in little more than 10 years. It's said the last villager left his house because he could not stand the loneliness. Being the only one remaining in the village, his fears surfaced and forced him to finally rent a house in the neighbouring village.

The village shows it beauty despite the desolation. The windows are decorated with carvings and murals and inside there are calligraphy works encouraging the descendants to study hard. It seems a shame that such beautiful homes have been abandoned.

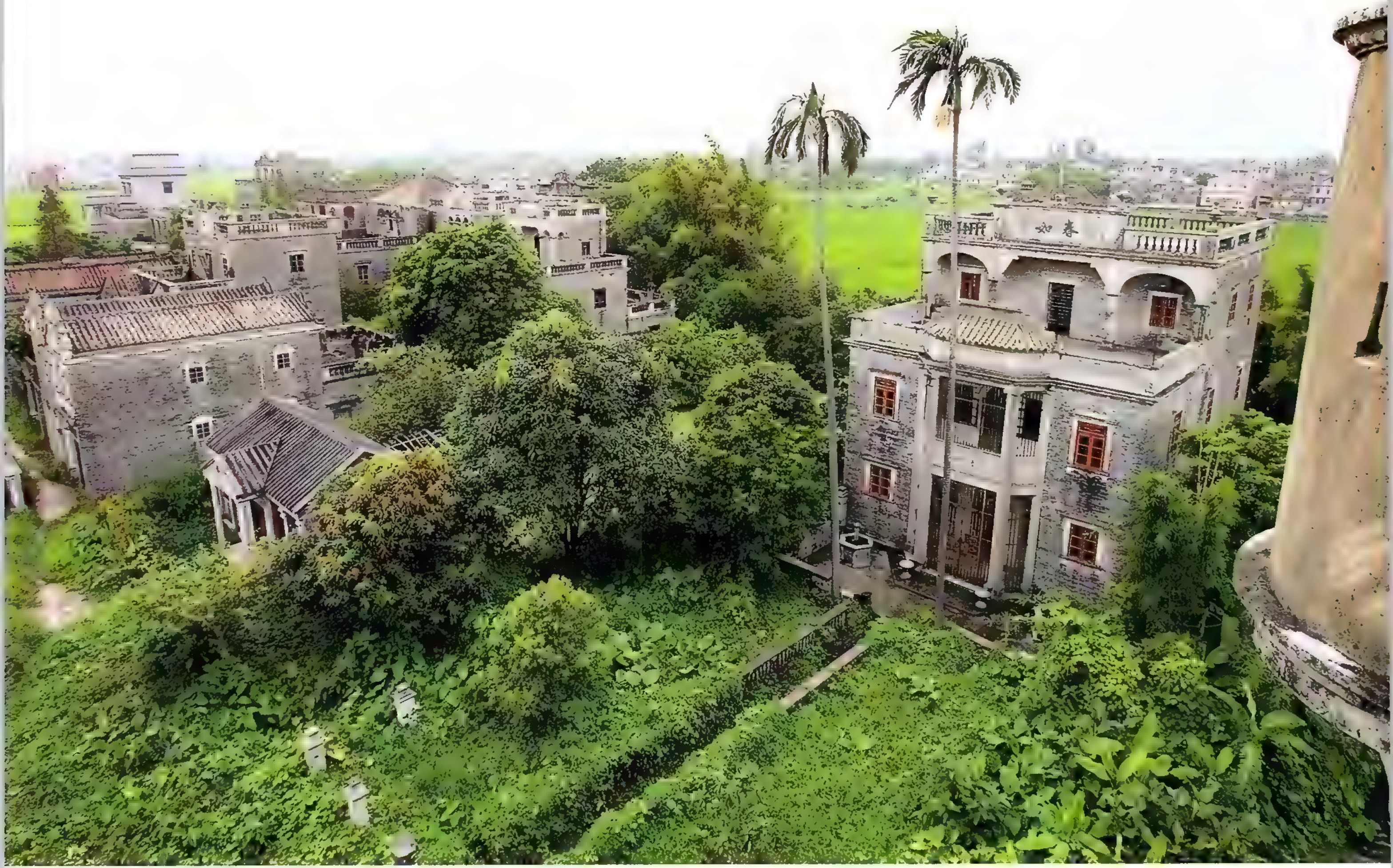


1. The giant banyan tree that has swallowed the building.

2. There is a big hole on the roof of an abandoned house.

3. A creek winds around the village.

4. Due to its desolation, Dengbian Village is mistakenly called Ghost Village.



Dragon-Greeting Building and Shrimp Village

Yinglong (Dragon-Greeting) Building in Sanmenli Village is the oldest watchtower house in Kaiping. Situated near downtown Wulong, close to the ferry bridge, it is about seven or eight kilometres from Sanbu. Shrimp Village has been honoured as the Canadian Village in recent years. You can reach it by following the traffic sign to 'Lingyuan' opposite the Sanmenli archway.

Kaiping's Oldest Watchtower Building

The three-story Yinglong Building stands over 10 metres high, with grey and red brick outer walls and a roof covered with tiles. Its four corner towers extend out a metre from the walls. Up close and looking to the sky, you feel its extraordinary grandness. Through the mansion's iron door you enter onto an unfinished earth floor and can see, on the left, a wood staircase leading to the upper floors. Although the living room space is only about 20 square metres, note that the watchtower's walls are 0.7 ~ 0.8 metres thick. It was a real stronghold.

Sanmenli villagers all know how their ancestors constructed the Yinglong Building. Long ago, when there were no watchtowers in the village, their patriarchal mother, who was not allowed to go into other families' watchtowers, decided to build one of her own. Only after she had mobilized all the young men in the clan to make bricks was she finally able to complete the building of Yinglong.

This house later became a life-saving refuge for the village. During the floods of1884 and 1908 in the reign of Qing Emperor Guangxu, as recorded in the Kaiping County Chronicle, 'Those who climbed onto this building all survived.'

Looking westward from the village entrance, a ridge called Wuzhi (Five Finger) Mountain is visible. As its outline resembles several dragons crawling along it — a good omen — the building was given the name Yinglong, or Dragon-Greeting.

The Canadian Village

Xiacun, or Shrimp Village, in the town of Chikan was once nicknamed Canadian Village by a reporter, due to the fact that the majority of its former villagers had immigrated to Canada.

Upon entering the village, you are immediately struck by the tall Sihao Building towering over the neighbouring two rows of Western-style villas, which are especially eye-catching in the sunshine. This village, with over 10 brick houses and a watchtower, looks nothing at all like a Chinese village.

Sihao was jointly built by Guang Guohao, Guan Guo'an, Guan Huade and Guan Chongjun in 1922 when the village was established. Hence its name, Sihao, or Four Heroes. This five-storey watchtower had a battery built on its roof, and being the tallest building of the village, was useful in guarding the villagers' peace and safety.

The two and a half storey, grey brick Junlu building is not a big one but its rich architectural style is well worth a look. It has a Roman arch with 10 exquisite reliefs.

2

Ruchun Building is the most lovely house in the Canadian Village. Evergreen plants fill its front garden and its gate is 'guarded' with two huge trees.

Due to its proximity to Sanmenli, the Canadian Village agreed to join the application for listing as a World Cultural Heritage site. In respect of this, its original structures have also been preserved.

1. A panoramic view of the Canadian Village, the right side showing the embrasures of the watchtower.

2. The current interior look of the Dragon-Greeting Tower.

3. The Dragon-Greeting Building, a well-built battery, is the oldest watchtower in Kaiping.

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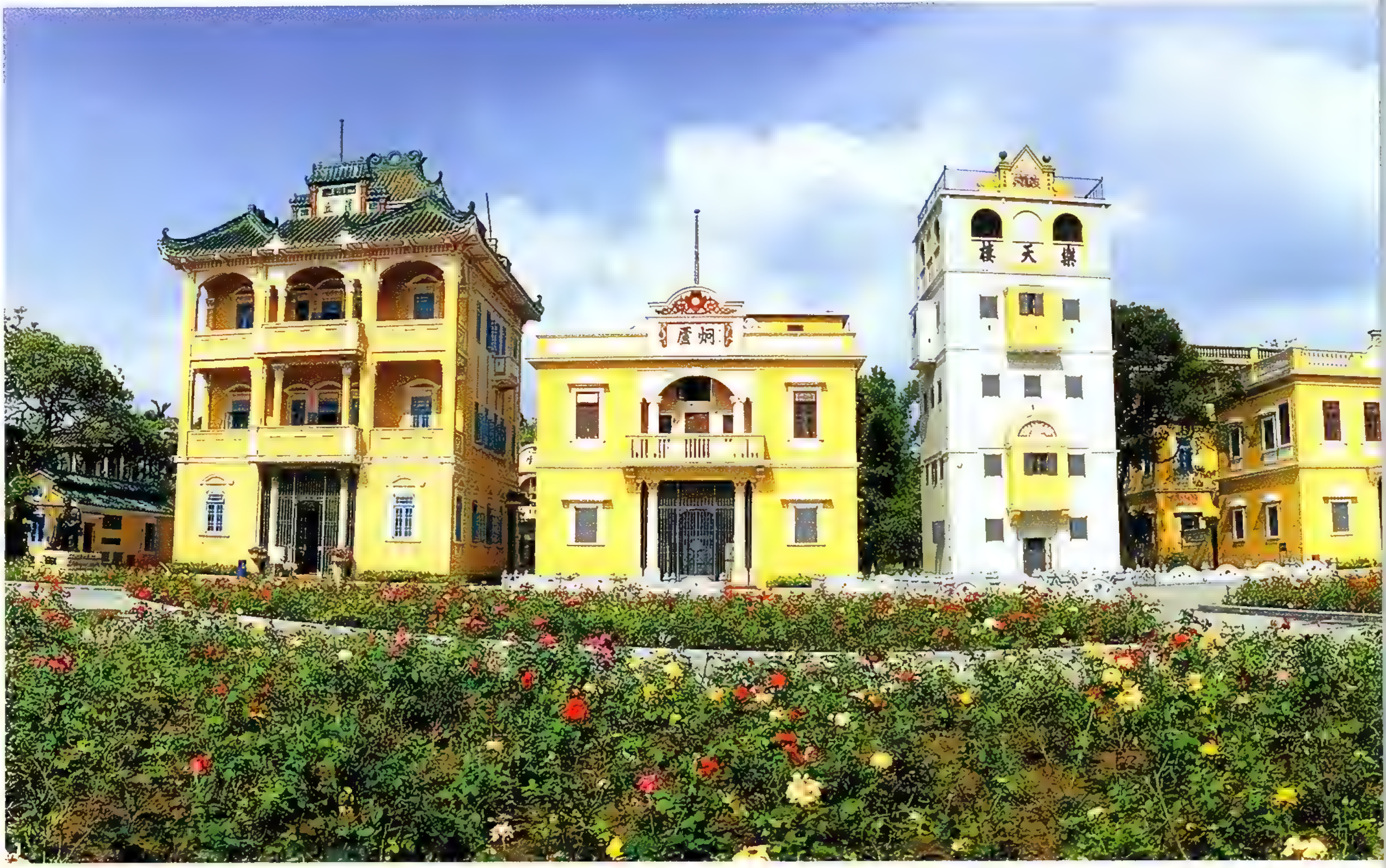


Liyuan Garden

Liyuan Garden, in Tangkou Town, is full of trees and plants planted by an expatriate Chinese, Xie Weili. Walking along a canal dug some 70 years ago, you'll be greeted by a traditional Chinese home door. The couplets on the door read: 'The building stands on a terrace facing three islands; flowers and plants in the garden make it spring all year round.' The 'three islands' represent the immortal mountains of Penglai, Fangzhang and Yingzhou, as in the ancient Chinese folklore. Taking it as an immortal land, Xie Weili, the owner, divided the garden into three parts: Villa Area, Garden Area and Small Garden.

The Villa Area

A cluster of tall buildings stands in the Liyuan Garden, including Panli, Panwen, Jonglu, Letian and Minglu. Letian Building is the oldest among them.

Panli and Panwen have the same architectural style. Each of them stands over 20 metres in height, with four stories; their front doors face the east, with a balcony built on each floor. In the pavilion tower built on the roof, Xie Weili set up a shrine to worship the family's ancestors. Interestingly, this shrine is not built in the traditional way popular in Kaiping, but in Italian architectural style, and a Kuomintang badge is engraved on the platform for sacrificial ceremonies. On the columns beside the shrine, a pair of couplets express the good wishes for national progress and family prosperity.

In the spacious living room, the ceramic floor tiles have Western-style design with round patterns of swirling grasses and flowers. The steps of the staircase, in the middle of the hall, are made of terrazzo mixed with crushed shells, whose lustre remains today.

On the first floor walls, there are several murals, mostly historical stories, by famous artists of the time. However, the most amazing artwork in the room is the huge sculpture Grand Entitling Ceremony of the Six Countries. It has more than 50 human figures, some big, some small, each with a unique expression. Its skilful carving makes all the people appear lifelike. Though more than 80 years have passed, the mural's golden paint is still shining.

The Garden Area

To the west of the Villa Area are many ancient trees, archway, villas, a study terrace, bird nests and green house. This garden is the most attractive part of Liyuan Garden.

The roof of the 20-metre tall archway is made of glazed tiles and its eaves are supported with bucket arches. The main structure, however, is not built with

wood but concrete.

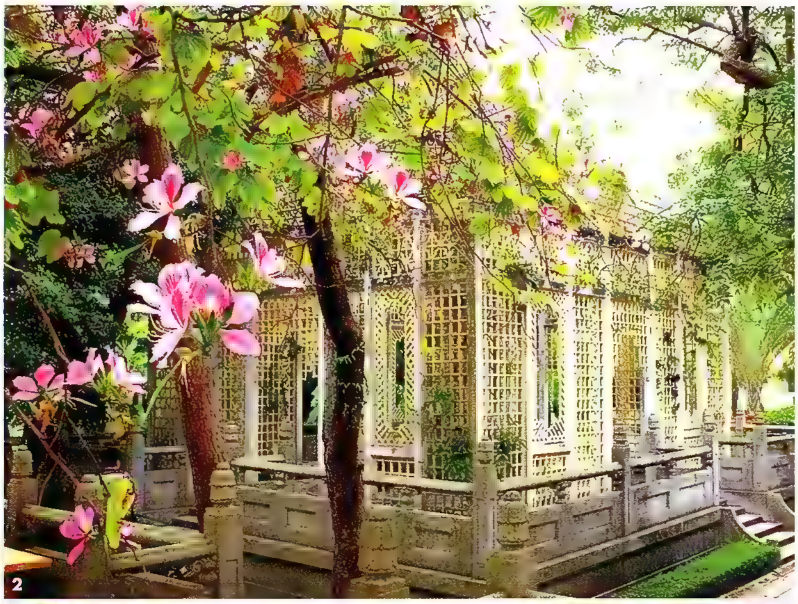
Standing behind the arch, on each side, is a Tiger-Beating Whip. These were set up to control the tiger, since the arch faces the Tiger Hill. Xie Weili ordered two iron bars, each 20 metres long with a diameter of 0.3 metres tapering off a little at the top end, to be erected here. Western style carvings adorn the whips' foundations; at the top is a square block, as is popularly seen on Chinese flagpoles. These Tiger Whips demonstrate the blend of Chinese and Western styles in architecture, seen in every corner of Liyuan Garden.

The Small Garden Area

The buildings of the Small Garden Area are different to those of the Villa and Garden areas. With luxuriant trees, running creeks and a pavilion, it offers a tranquil environment to visitors. At its entrance, there is a round pond with a three-metre Zhenshe (Snake-Quelling) Pagoda. It was built here because of the many snakes that inhabited the wetland by the banks of Tanxi Stream running to the east of Liyuan Garden.

Xie Weili had two creeks creatively dug and concreted their banks. He also had sluice gates put in to raise the water level so as to create better water views for people looking out from the pavilion.

Translated by Gloria Shang



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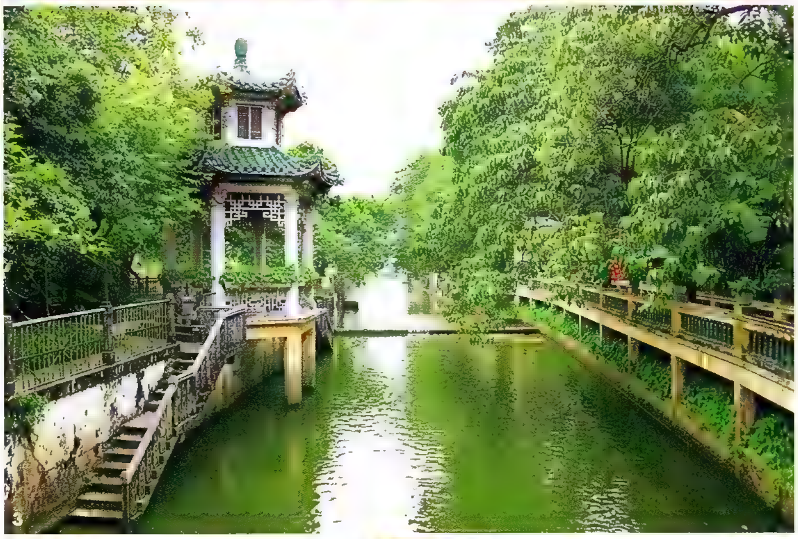

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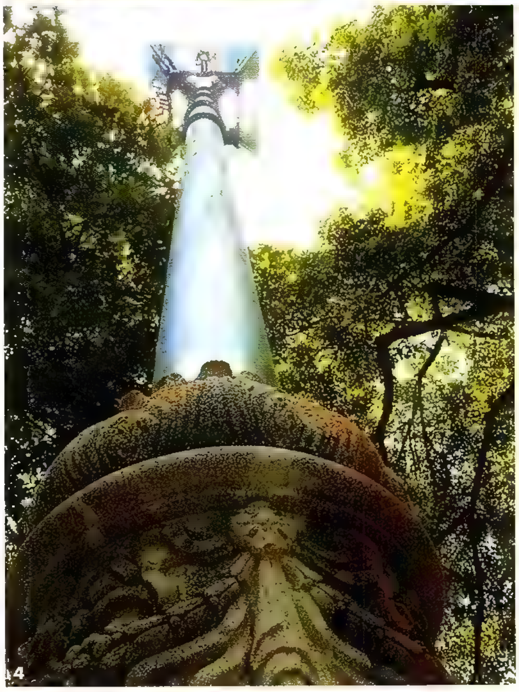

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1. The magnificent line of watchtowers in Liyuan Garden.

2. A colourful western gazebo.

3. An attractive pavilion standing by the creek.

4. The Tiger-Beating Whips demonstrate the blend of Chinese and western architectural styles.

1

Strolling Through Sanfu District

Sanfu (Three Towns), in the centre of Kaiping, comprises the towns of Changsha, Dihai and Xinchang. Topographically, it is very similar to Wuhan, capital city of Hubei Province. The town's nostalgic feel easily transports visitors back in time.

Sanfu has long been renowned as 'Lesser Wuhan' since its topography resembles the three merged towns of Wuhan in Hubei. Meanwhile, it used to be a must stop-over which led to the so-called 'Six Capitals' such as Taishan in the ancient times. Hence, it was known as the 'Key to the Six Capitals' during the the reign of Emperor Xianfeng (1851—1861) of the Qing dynasty. The three towns of Sanfu were originally established in 1368 of the Ming dynasty. In particular, Dihai had been the most important among the three towns due to its prosperous economy, larger population and greater area.

Changsha

Changsha was already a country fair area as early as the time of Ming Emperor Hongwu's reign. Now it is where Kaiping's City Committee and municipal government are located. Small in area, the original Changsha was merely one single straightforward street about a kilometre long extending from the present Changsha Attached Primary School to the Changsha Bus Terminus. The Xingguang and Jianlian districts, once rural areas, have now become part of the city. To date, the urban area in Changsha Town has extended northward to the foot of Mt Liangjin, including the Changsha District, Jinyuan Garden (a luxurious residential community), Jinshan Middle School, the west part of Mt Liangjin Tourist Resort, and the Bus Terminus. It has stretched to the Sanjiang District in the west, where state-of-the-art, luxurious residences will be constructed along the Sanjiang

2

3

(Three Rivers) Avenue.

The most beautiful scenery lies along a two-kilometre stretch from the riverside at the port in the east, past the Kaiping and Tanjiang bridges, and finally to the Sanjiang Bridge. Strolling along the banks, one can see a broad road completely shaded by red budding flowers. Looking ahead, hundreds of watchtowers appear to be standing guard over the river. The natural stone guardrails along this section from the Tanjiang Bridge to the Sanjiang Bridge have been sculpted into traditional style Kaiping watchtowers with a dome and a pill box on each corner, making this area particularly attractive.

Beside the Huaqiao (Overseas Chinese) Bridge across the Tanjiang River, stands a large complex of modern constructions called the Boat of the Century. This structure resembles a huge ship with its sails raised, ready to launch. All around it, a broad walkway allows Kaiping residents plenty of space to enjoy their leisure time. During the Dragon Boat Festival (the fifth day of the fifth lunar month), dragon boat races are held right here.

Across the Cangjiang River, there is a new urban square, of outstanding design, capable of accommodating thousands of people. It directly faces a bridge built in two opposing semi-circles, with a huge circular musical fountain in the centre. Every night when the curtain of darkness falls, the fountain dances like a group of pretty girls to the tunes of soft music...

Delicious Street Snacks

Another fascinating place in Changsha is the Tourist Shopping Street. This street, on the northern bank of the Cangjiang River and very close to the Northern City Square is very long. At its middle is a string of two-storey building in the Western European style which extends over 500 metres over the street. Below it are two streets with a multitude of restaurants and shops that sell clothes, shoes, cosmetics, daily commodities and so on. It's a feast for the eyes.

1. Sanfu, which comprises Changsha, Dihai and Xinchang, topographically resembles the three towns of Wuhan in Hubei Province. In this picture, fireworks are set off over the Tanjiang River for a festival.

2. The guardrails along the Tanjiang River are styled like watchtowers with local characteristics.

3. The design of the Cangjiang River Bridge in Changsha, with a fountain at its centre, certainly shows some originality.

4. With its sails raised, the 'Ship of the Century' seems ready to launch.

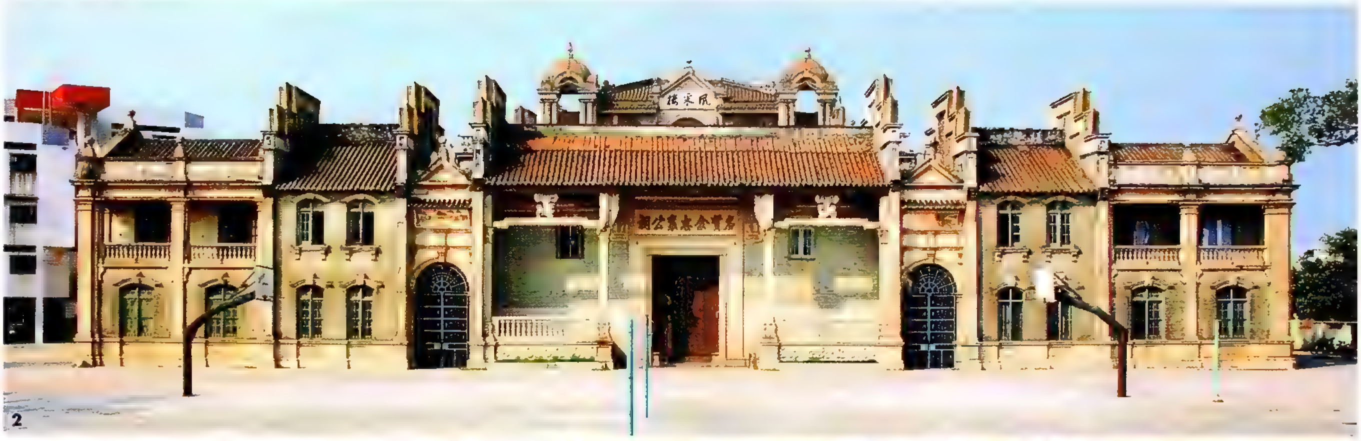
4

1

Dihai

Immediately you enter Dihai, from whichever direction, you feel that the time has slowed down. Strolling quietly down the ancient streets, occasionally halting to look up at the shabby, dust-covered storefronts signs, placing a hand on the painted cement pillars of the veranda (or locally called *qilou*), listening to the elderly people basking leisurely in the winter sunlight, smelling the mixture of burning charcoal and wood in the air... it seems as if time has gone in reverse. It is hard to believe that Dihai used to be the most prosperous town in Sanfu.

In the old days, there were a number of significant streets and roads: Dadao Road; Zilai Street, which was also known as 'Salted Fish Street' since only salted fish were sold there; Chang'an Street, which was known as Miji (Rice-machine) Street where only grains were processed; and Zhonghe Road, which was Dihai's main street. The Zhonghe Road, going through the town from west to east, led to Taishan so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1. Under the antique qilou houses, some street barbers cut hair for their neighbours. Such a scene is reminiscent of Hong Kong half a century ago.

2. The Fengcai Building is nearly 100 years old.

3. Golden ornament craftsmen are still found on the streets of Dihai.

4. The formerly bustling Wanhua Teahouse has been regretfully closed.

there was also a bus station at the nearby country fair entrance. This street also has veranda architecture, and the shops, many of which were opened by merchants from Suzhou and Hangzhou in Zhejiang Province. would have been packed along both sides. Besides the shops selling Chinese herbs, furniture, gold ornaments, roasted meat, groceries, and books, there were also restaurants, pawnshops, Western-style clinics, churches, a post office, schools and so on. The prosperity of long ago was far beyond the imagination.

Disappearance of an Old Teahouse

At that time, the famous Wanhua Teahouse, facing the Xianglong Islet at the riverside, was still open. The magnificent rosewood tables and chairs in this three-storey teahouse evoked an atmosphere of elegance. Every early morning, crowds of people would come here from all directions to drink tea, and regular customers hurried to occupy their usual seats as soon as they arrived. Here was endless shouting to sell various kinds of tasty dim sum, mixed with the smell of cigarette smoke — a typical Cantonese morning tea scene.

This teahouse had been operating from before the liberation in 1949 to the 1980s. Despite being etched indelibly into the minds of veteran Dihai people, the Wanhua Teahouse eventually closed its doors as solidly as a prison gate.

Another area stimulating old memories is Shiguolan (Seasonal Fruits Market). As its name implies, it used to be a market for seasonal vegetables and fruits. Being located on the eastern side of the present Dixin Bridge, where the Jiaojiang River coming from Taishan converged with the Tanjiang River, water transport was convenient for the establishment of a market here. In fact, not only seasonal vegetables and fruits were sold here, but also general merchandise, daily items, dried goods, construction materials and so on.

Fengcai Building Designed by a Foreigner

Fengcai Middle School, near Shiguolan, stands close to the former Fengcai House a remarkable ancestral temple of the Yu Family. It is renowned for its unique architectural style and long history. It was in the memory of the Yu clan's ancestor Yu Jing that his offspring around Dihai built this structure in the 32nd year (1906) of the Guangxu Reign of the Qing dynasty. The building was consecrated in the spring of the fourth year (1915) of the Republic of China, and was the largest Yu clan ancestral temple besides the Fengcai House in Shaoguan.

Fengcai Building does not follow the traditional three-yard pattern of other Fengcai Building ancestral temples but has some added structures. Interestingly, the blueprint of this building was designed by a foreigner, who was paid 'five hundred silver coins' on the spot.

1

Xinchang

Strictly speaking, Xinchang is not an island but its location on the southern bank of Tanjiang River means that bridges are needed to connect it to the outside world in all directions. The city was built in a west-to-east direction along the riverbank, facing Changsha.

Due to historical factors, Xinchang has traditionally been a business town, where there are both aged terrace streets and modern structures as well as other facilities. The Xinhua Street is a relatively well-known business street. After some repair work in recent years, it has developed into a shopping street. With all the terrace streets painted and the ground newly paved, it is a must-visit location for tourists. In addition, back in the 1970s, the Xinhua Back Street was jokingly called Kaiping's 'Wall Street' since all the residents there had been wealthy.

Xinchang, is a newly developed town, only established 30 years after Dihai. In 1927, some old streets in Xinchang were demolished to expand the urban area with 14 new streets. At that time, some well-off families, particularly the relatives of the overseas Chinese, saw the opportunity in buying real estate, and businesses such as power plants, cinemas, post offices, telecommunication offices, teahouses, public houses, hotels, clothing shops, construction materials shops, Chinese medicine shops, gold ornaments shops, and the Hongji Hospital. Gambling houses, opium houses and whorehouses could be found everywhere then. During that period, Xinchang became the most prosperous business district in Sanfu.

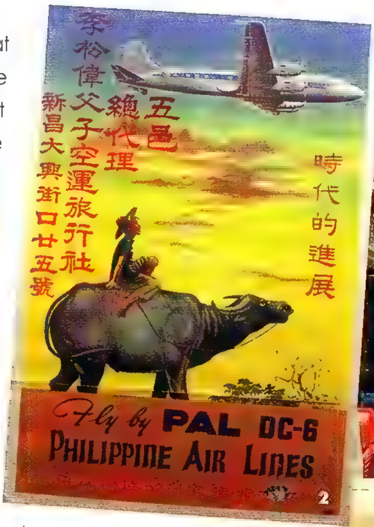
When in Xinchang, the terrace streets as well as the exquisite quicklime reliefs on the old shops along the streets are really something to see. As in the past,

1. Jinsheng is a 100-year-old shop specializing in Lion Dance accoutrements.

2. Half a century ago, an airplane passing over Kaiping's rural areas was a sensational event to a farmer.

3. The veranda buildings are preserved along both sides of the street.

4. The sculptured flowers that form part of the veranda's window frames are well preserved.



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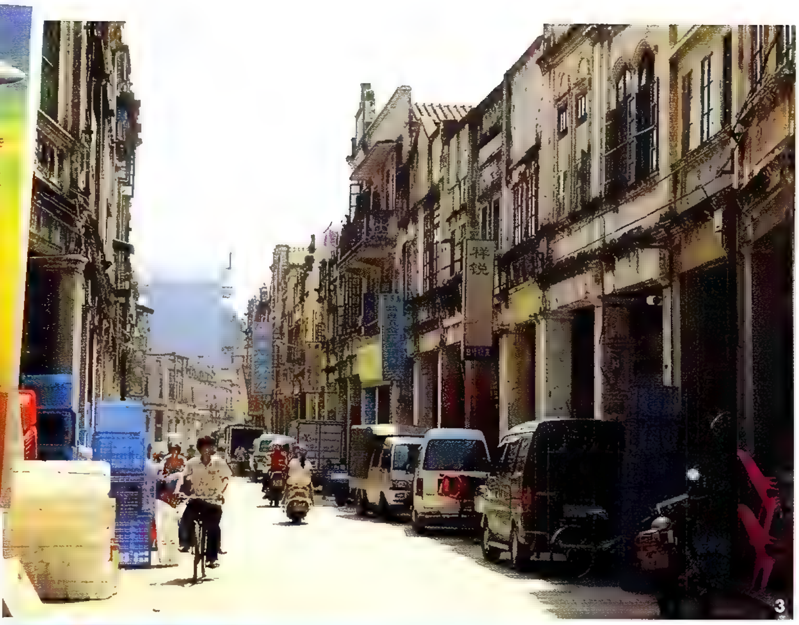
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these old streets start at what used to be the Daxing Street crossroad (now the Xinchang Chinese Medicine Hospital), and stretch all the way to the crossroad at the old nitrogenous fertilizer plant. There may be as many as 200 old qilou shops here. Some are still in use as businesses, including a cake factory at the Xinchang Medicine Hospital. On this street there is a 100-year-old shop named Jinsheng (Sounds of Gold), which manually makes lion heads and drums specifically for the Lion Dance. The wooden sign over the shop door is more than 100 years old.

The Kaiping Weishida Sauce Company Limited is known for the fresh soy sauce it produces. This company was previously the Kaiping Soy Stuff Factory. At that time, there were also some other well-known soy shops in Xinchang, such as Zanji, Gaoshanyi and Nansheng, most of which operated with a shop front selling the goods and a rear section where processing was done. In the late 1950s, one could find many earthenware jars used to produce soy in the Yongfu Back Street in Xinchangwei. Fancy covers woven with bamboo strips sat on top of these jars containing fermenting soybeans.

Another important place in Xinchangwei is the previous 'Chuan Wu Hang' (Shipping Centre) near the sea, now the Port Affairs Office. Due to Sanfu's location and convenient waterways navigation around it, it became a good location for ships to begin voyages to Guangzhou, Hong Kong and Macau. At that time, the boats themselves were not equipped with engines, therefore a towboat was employed, using a long piece of thick bamboo rope to haul it forward. This type of navigation by these 'huaweidu' boats continued until the 1980s when it was no longer needed due to more convenient highway transport.

Along the river channels in Xinchangwei, another type of unimaginable transport existed for a few months — the shuttle seaplanes. On 8 August, 1949, the Wuyi Air Travelling Subsidiary of the Central Air Transport Co. opened an air route from Sanfu to Guangzhou and from Sanfu via Guangzhou to Hong Kong. The 'airport' at that time was on the Tanjiang River channel at Xinchangwei. The small Model 147 planes had no radio or weather equipment, let alone any ground navigational system. A successful flight depended completely on the personal skills of the pilots.

Flight prices were 13 silver yuan (13 silver coins, each worth one yuan, equivalent to HK$65 then from Sanfu to Guangzhou, and 29 silver yuan (HK$105) from Sanfu to Hong Kong. Unfortunately this wonderful air transport did not last long due to insufficient business volume, and no shadows of the shuttling planes has been seen on the surface of the Tanjiang River since 14 October, 1949.

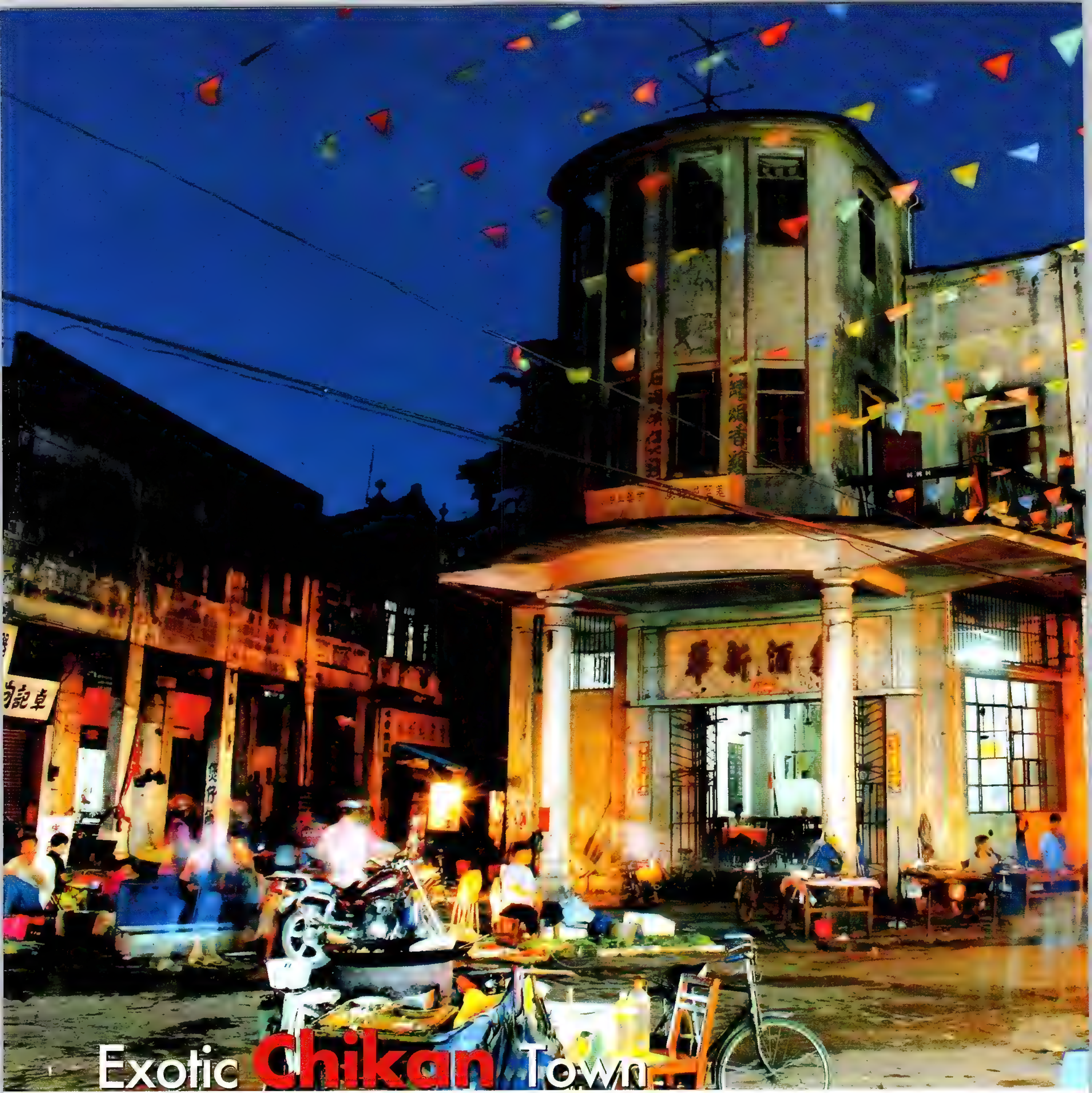
Translated by Huang Deyuan

Sanfu as a Land of Bridge

Sanfu is really a 'land of bridges' because of the intersecting rivers.

In the past, travel to and from Xinchang, Changsha and Dihai was inconvenient as it had to be by boat across the rivers that separated them. Later, some 'pontoon bridges' were set up with wooden boats, connecting Sanfu with Dihai and Changsha. Since these 'pontoon bridges' accommodated only pedestrians and cyclists, Dihai, Xinchang and Changsha all had their own coach stations, providing access to Taishan, Chikan, Guangdong respectively, as well as other places.

As the city developed, a total of 13 bridges have now been built in the Sanfu area. Occasionally one now hears Sanfu discussed as a city of water and bridges, somewhat like Venice.



Exotic Chikan Town

1. Chikan looks very much like an old European town. The Huaxin Restaurant (華新酒家) in this photo was once a popular haunt.

2. Chikan was once Kaiping's centre of culture, economy and politics. Its Christian church was built a long time ago.

3. The old Bell Tower still stands firm.

4. The grand terrace houses on Dixi Road.

Like Sanfu, Chikan is another old town with plenty of Western-style architecture. Its character even attracted Jackie Chan to film the outdoor scenes for his movie *Drunken Master Vol. 2* here.

Long ago, many of Chikan's residents migrated to the United States, Canada, Britain and the Philippines, thus making it a famous overseas Chinese hometown. Despite having only 7,000 residents and an area of 1.5 sq km, Chikan was nonetheless once the centre of the economy, politics, culture and education of Kaiping County. Located in the heart of Kaiping, it enjoys convenient transportation, with the Tanjiang River linking it with Enping and Zhanjiang towns upstream, and Sanbu, Jiangmen and Guangzhou in its lower reaches, and Hong Kong and Macau a little further away.

Kingdom of Terrace Houses

The flourishing businesses of the 1900 ~ 1935 period resulted in the mushrooming of terrace houses with ground floor shops. Along a section of the 1,200 metre-long Zhonghua Road East and West, for instance, there are 400 such shops. In the early 1980s, some dilapidated shops were torn down for

safety reasons, and some terrace houses were demolished to make room for the Municipal No. 2 People's Hospital and the Guangyu Middle School but most of the others have been preserved. All the 48 shops on the 275-metre-long Dixi Road have also been kept intact.

An Ideal Movie Backdrop

When Jackie Chan came to shoot Drunken Master Vol. 2 in 1994, he had the look of the entire Dixi Road turned back to its style to decades ago. With a five-storey property facade erected, the brand-new buildings at Henan Islet 'disappeared' in an instant. Then, British flags flapped in the wind on the 'old' buildings, a poster bearing the words 'No Dogs or Chinese' was set by the bridge, and a huge plaster model was placed on an artificial grassland to recreate the 1930s scene of Guangzhou.

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1. This terrace house has two-storey tall Roman columns.

2. Despite the European buildings, Chikan's Chinese nature surfaces during the Spring Festival, especially with the stalls selling spring couplets and scrolls of auspicious sayings.

3. Fried tofu is the most popular snack in Chikan.

4. The former Huaxin Restaurant building is now a food paste factory.

5. A quiet Chikan street at night.

A European Street

Dixi Road has another beautiful name: European Street. This name came from the many European-style pediments. According to the Kaiping Encyclopaedia, 'the shops then were all brick-and-timber structures, rectangular with tile roofs. The front of the shop sold goods and the rear was a warehouse or kitchen. Wide eaves sheltered the pedestrians from the rain and sun. The main street was originally only two to three metres wide, and the lanes even narrower. Due to large-scale renovations in 1926, many shops were dismantled and the main street was widened to eight or nine metres and extended through the whole town. The buildings on both sides were usually two to three storeys high; some four to five storey ones had arcades. A dike with steps was built on the north side of the Tanjiang River, and arcade-houses built over it. The town's buildings were all made of reinforced cement, but the styles varied.'

Once, there had been numerous businesses on the streets, and many merchant boats travelling along the river. Tall barbicans stand near the Guan's Library and in the Guangyu Middle School, guarding the small town.

Chikan's ancient buildings usually have exquisite relief and grand arches. On the top, still tangible, are building names like 'Huianhe' and 'Canxinglu', and on one building, '1927' can be seen. Most buildings and barbicans here are named '*lu*' or '*lou*' (meaning 'building' or 'tower'). But one is exceptional, with an elegant and humble name, '*Xiaozhu*' (petite building).

On the old street upstream on the Tanjiang River, there is an old restaurant called Huaxin. Once a popular hangout, it is now a quiet place, and the bustling scenes have become a mere memory. Vegetable, roasted meat and snack stalls stand by its side today.

The East Zhonghua Road and Didong Road extend eastwards to the market entrance. Along the road sides are more than 100 buildings, the most famous in history being Kaiping Restaurant, Datong Cinema, Paris Inn, and Situ's Library. The T-junction at Kaiping Lane is the best place to find Fried Tofu, Hotpot Rice and Roast Goose. Besides delicious food, diners can also enjoy the view of the arcade-houses and street scenes.

Speaking of fried tofu, the locals will mention Tao Zhu, the former Party secretary of Guangdong Province. It's said that when Mr. Tao visited Kaiping, he tried some fried tofu prepared by a Chikan woman and highly praised its flavour. After that, the food became known far and near.

Land of Art

Small town that it is, Chikan is surprisingly home to many renowned people: Guan Jinzao (artist residing in France), Guan Moyuan (artist residing in Mexico), Situ Qi (artist residing in Canada), Situ Qiao (oil painter), Sha Fei (also called Situ Chuan, a revolutionary photographer), Tak-Hing Kwan (an actor playing the role of kungfu master Wong Fei Hong in the movie series Once Upon A Time in China), Situ Huimin (Former Vice Minister of Culture), Situ Han (musician), Yu Qiwei (gaohu, a two-stringed musical instrument, musician), Situ Li (resident artist in France), Yang Da (cross-talk artist) and Guan Guohua (Guangdong opera artist).

The beautiful, three-storey Guan's Library is located on the upper reaches of the river. Besides a rich collection of books, it also houses a large number of paintings and calligraphy works of Chinese artists.

The Situ's Library on the river's lower reaches was built in 1925. In addition to works by artists Situ Qi, Situ Qiao and Situ Mian, visitors can also learn the stories of other famous people. The most unique features of these two private libraries are the bell towers on top of each building. As their bells strike on the hour, the sound resonates all over the small town.

Translated by Julia Han

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Travel Tips for Kaiping

Statues erected to the memory of heroes sacrificed during the Anti-Japanese period

Long-distance Transportation

Kaiping is 140 km from Guangzhou and it's 1.5 hours' drive by the Foshan-Kaiping Expressway. Frequent buses are available at the Guangzhou-Foshan Bus Station on Zhongshan Balu, the Bus Station opposite Kengkou Subway Station, the Tianhe Bus Station and the Guangdong Provincial Bus Station.

There is a ship travelling between Hong Kong and Guangzhou every day, and extra trips are available on holidays and festivals. Or you can take the bus that departs Hong Kong's Prince Edward MTR Station by noon and arrives at Kaiping by evening. It's also convenient to travel from Macau, as Kaiping is 368 km from Zhuhai, which is about four hours' drive.

In-town Transportation

Kaiping has a large number of barbicans, with the most in Tangkou, Xiangang, Baihe, Chikan and Chishui. Tourists can take buses from the Kaiping Bus Station to these places, or take sightseeing coaches to Liyuan Garden, Zili Village and Chikan. If you take the Kaiping-Yangjiang Expressway, you can exit at Sijiu and follow the road signs, and Zili Village and Liyuan Garden are within 10 minutes' walk and Chikan Town within 20 minutes' walk.

Besides buses, you can also take a taxi or a minibus: pay the taxi by the metre, and pay the minibus 20 for a single trip to Liyuan Garden.

Motorbike is another cheap choice, but remember to wear a helmet.

Accommodation

■ **Ever Joint Peninsular Hotel** ★★★★★

Add: 2 Zhongyin Road Tel: (750) 233 3333

The best hotel in Kaiping, the 32-storey building has complete facilities. It's an ideal place to enjoy the great view of Sanbu and the Tanjiang River that runs on three sides of the hotel.

■ **Hotel Holiday Sanbu** ★★★★

Add: Gangkou Road, Changsha Tel: (750) 228 6333

It is located in east Changsha and near the Tanjiang River.

■ **Sanbu Harbor View Hotel** ★★★

Add: West Tanjiang Road, Xinchang Tel: (750) 238 8888

It occupies the best place by the Tanjiang River, the most prosperous place in Xinchang.

■ **Radio and TV Building** ★★

Add: 2 Xijiao Road, Changsha Tel: (750) 221 2213

It boasts the most bustling place in Changsha, with convenient access to scenic spots, shopping and transportation. The rooms are tidy and neat, but not expensive.

■ **Xingdu Hotel**

Add: 10 Guangming Road, Changsha Tel: (750) 228 7838

It is situated to the south of the Canjiang River, Changsha.

■ **Yuehai Hotel**

Add: West Tanjiang Road, Xinchang Tel: (750) 238 8128

The hotel's location by the Tanjiang River offers most rooms views of the river. The Changsha River and Mt. Liangjin also fall into the field of vision. The accommodation is moderate.

Admissions

■ Zili Village	30 yuan
■ Liyuan Garden	60 yuan
■ Majianglong	40 yuan
■ Chikan Backlot	20 yuan
■ Zili Village, Liyuan Garden and Chikan Backlot	90 yuan
■ Zili Village, Liyuan Garden, Chikan Backlot and Majianglong	110 yuan

There are also group tickets for package tours.

Local Delicacies

Chikan

Since Chikan has long been hometown of overseas Chinese and many people have relatives living abroad, the relation may explain their swelled wallets and wide knowledge about food. With so many 'belly-gods', no wonder the local food tastes so good. Fried Tofu and hotpot of fresh meat, fresh aquatic products and fresh vegetables are on top of the list.

By the river are many eateries that open all day. They are good at making special delicacies out of ordinary materials, such as Fish Noodle with Black Bean Sauce, Claypots, Steamed Fish with Salted Shrimp, Steamed Pork with Salted Shrimp, Potato and Clam Meat Hotpot, Soup of Entrails of Ox or Pig, Sweet Potato Leaves Served with Shrimp Sauce, and Glutinous Rice. At dusk, many diners will drive here, find a seat by the river to chill out in the cool breeze. The exotic scenery adds exotic flavour to the local specialities.

The food stalls usually open at night. In addition to Sweetened Mung-bean Paste, Herbal Jelly Served with Honey, Sweet Kelp Soup, Sesame Paste and other sweet soups, roasted chicken wings, squids and cobs are very popular in recent years.

A local must-try is Duck Congee. When night falls, the vendors will come out with their carts. In the day, they have already got the congee done, the duck pot-stewed and cut, and such ingredients as celery, parsley and ground pepper ready. Now, they only need to display their utensils to serve up their mouth-watering congee, mixed with fine shreds of duck meat and diverse seasonings, as the patrons are impatient to wait.

■ **Chaojiangchun Restaurant**

The Chaojiangchun (潮江春) Restaurant lies east of the Musha Bridge, Changsha. In front is a wood of Chinese redbud and the Canjiang River. The restaurant is not big, but quite quaint. It prides itself on its impeccable dishes, known for their colour, aroma and flavour. The most known dishes: Doggie Goose, Lotus Root Soup, Salt-baked Fish, Sauteed Squid with Salted Pork, and Fried Glutinous Rice. The first to order is of course Doggie Goose, a 1992 invention by its boss Mr. Li. The goose is from Mr. Li's hometown Magang (home of one of the four renowned goose species in south China) and is braised with Shagang garlic (native Kaiping product), dried tangerine peel, preserved bean-curd, ginger and salt.

Lotus Root Hotpot is another house special of Chaojiangchun. Local lotus roots are braised with pork rib till the soup tastes a bit sweet, but not oily at all. The soft and floury roots are another impressive feature of the hotpot.

The Salt-baked Fish is also a good bet. The even heat of the salt helps the flesh of fish absorb the flavour of ingredients stuffed in the belly, while keeping its own delicacy.

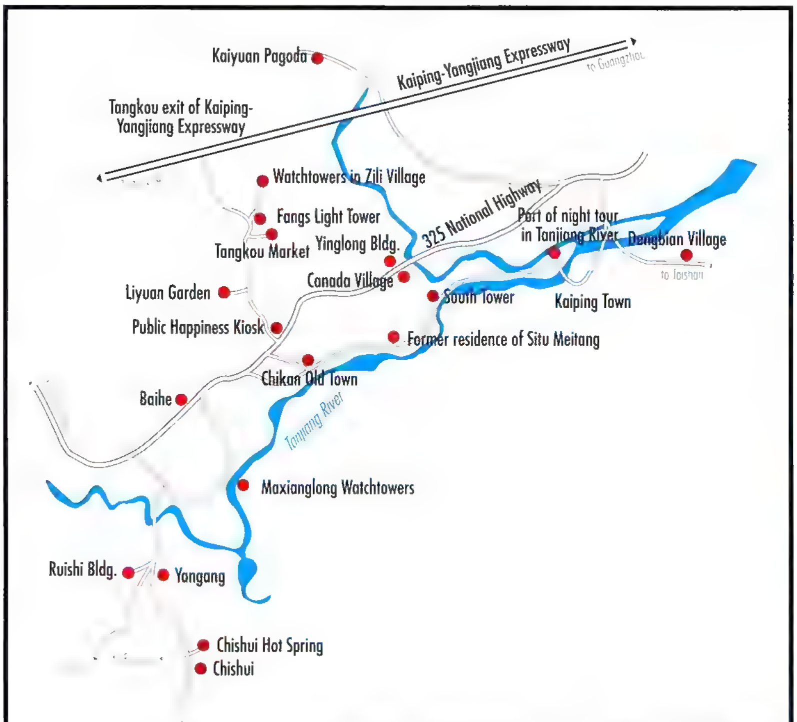
Chaojiangchun Restaurant

Doggie Goose, an authentic Kaiping dish

Bridge over the Tanjiang River

Guanhai Restaurant

The Guanhai Restaurant (觀海酒樓) is known for its aquatic products and countryside dishes. Its pleasant location enables the diners to enjoy the gentle breeze from the nearby river and the view of the Nanlou Park in the distance, while savouring cooked products from the river. The yummy Catfish Braised with Garlic, Steamed Clam, Steamed Eggplant with Preserved Bean-curd, Kidney Beans, Tri-flavour Fish, Fried Tofu, and Clam Meat Congee can satisfy the taste buds of any visitor coming especially for them on weekends. Compared with the tastes, the prices are really reasonable.


Kaiyuan Pagoda
Kaiping-Yangjiang Expressway
to Guangzhou
Tangkou exit of Kaiping-Yangjiang Expressway
Watchtowers in Zili Village
Fangs Light Tower
325 National Highway
Port of night tour in Tanjiang River
Tangkou Market
Yinglong Bldg.
Dengbian Village
to Taishan
Canada Village
Liyuan Garden
South Tower
Kaiping Town
Public Happiness Kiosk
Former residence of Situ Meitang
Chikan Old Town
Baihe
Tanjiang River
Maxianglong Watchtowers
Ruishi Bldg.
Yangang
Chishui Hot Spring
Chishui

Location Map of Watchtowers & Villages in Kaiping

Among Kaiping's many delicacies, one thing can't be found elsewhere: 'Ox Foot Callus'.

This is a perennial favourite in Magang and Cangcheng. Not as the name indicates, what is eaten is not the callus, but the meat inside. The white meat becomes very crispy after a good boil. The slices, dipped in salt and other seasonings, are really dainty.

In recent years, more and more local snacks are being developed. Among them, Bozaigao (glutinous rice steamed in earthen bowl) and cakes made of wormwood and other herbs are the best received.

Recommended Itineraries

One-day Tour

If you drive by yourself, please take the Kaiping-Yangjiang Expressway, and exit at Sijiu to head for Zili Village, Liyuan Garden and Chikan. After the trip, you can easily find the access back to the expressway.

Two-day Tour

Day One: Take the Kaiping-Yangjiang Expressway, and exit at Sijiu to head for Zili Village, Liyuan Garden, Chikan and Sanbu. Stay at Sanbu in the evening. You may want to do some shopping and try some local snacks.

Day Two: In the morning, first visit Yinglong Tower at Sanmen Lane and Canada Village, before heading for Maxianglong ecological zone of Baihe Town. At noon, return via Chikan to Guanhai Restaurant near Nanlou to try unique local dishes, then visit Sanbu Town before winding up your trip.

Three-day Tour

Day One: The same as Day One of Two-Day Tour.

Day Two: The morning arrangement is the same as that of Day Two of Two-Day Tour. After lunch, go to Jinjiang Lane of Xiangang Town to have a look at Ruishi Watchtower, the best-known one in Kaiping. Then head for Datong Lane, Chishui Town for Yiyun Watchtower and two other watchtowers. If time permits, you may return to Zili Village to take a marvellous photo of the Fang's Light Tower in the evening glow.

You may have dinner at Sanbu's Ever Joint Peninsular Hotel, Chaojiangchun Restaurant or the Millennium Boat Building, while enjoying the night view on the Tanjiang River.

Day Three: In the morning, first visit Chikan Town, then go to Nanlou Park. Have lunch at Guanhai Restaurant, then visit Dengbian Village via Sanbu. Return in the evening.

Tanjiang Peninsular Hotel

Enjoying *Hot Springs* in Huizhou

1. Invested with a million RMB, the giant 'sea turtle' in the resort attracts every guest's attention. Inside the turtle is the Longevity Pool.

2. The Chinese Herb Pool is in the huge 'bottle gourds'.

3. Built with 350 million yuan, the Huizhou Haibin Wenquan Tourist Resort boasts 72 characteristic hot spring pools.

4. The hot spring pools keep one warm even at night.

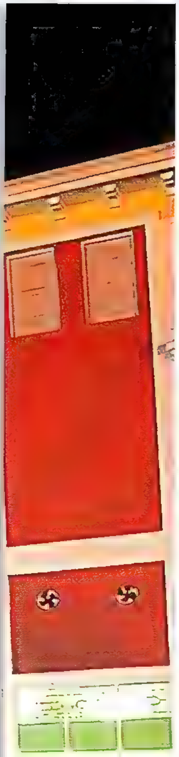
5, 6. Fresh seafood from Australia or U.S.A. are guaranteed in quality.

Hong Kong people are smart in hunting for gourmets and enjoyment, and going to Guangdong's hot spring resorts is one of their favourite weekend programmes. Recently, I've also visited the newly-opened Huizhou Coast Hotspring Resort and enjoyed 72 characteristic hot spring pools. Besides, I also travelled to the nearby Pinghai Old Town and tasted delicious seafood.

The Huizhou Coast Hotspring Resort lies in Huidong County of Huizhou, a city located in western Guangdong Province which requires only about two hours' bus from Shenzhen. Although this one in Huizhou may not be as popular as those well-developed hot spring sites in Guangzhou, Shenzhen, or Zhuhai, the quality, variety, facilities, food and beverage and hotel services absolutely reach the level of a five-star tourist resort.

Superior Enjoyment

The resort is built along the mountain landscape. Its total area covers 100,000 square metres, almost equal to 20 standard pitches. The 72 hot spring pools themed as seashore are created in different styles. Some interesting pools are the Longevity Pool which locates in the 'big stomach' of a sea turtle; the Chinese Herb Pool which is in the huge bottle gourds, etc. There are China's unique hot spring maze and pearl



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pool as the biggest attractions. Besides, adventurous guests can go for the artificial surfing.

The service of the resort is another thing that has won my heart. As long as you wave your hands, attendants will immediately bring you a cup of boiled water, towel, or fruits (the amount of fruits you take is unlimited!). I felt if I have become an emperor. As for the accommodation part, Thai-style or Continental Europe type villas are available. The second phase of the resort will include a hot spring grand canyon, FWD club, equestrian course, Japanese villa, Chinese quadrangles and deluxe clubs.

Yummy Seafood

As the Chinese saying goes, 'eat from the mountain when living near a mountain, and eat from the sea when living near the sea', so tasting seafood must not be missed when visiting a coastal city like Huizhou! Sea urchin, ocean fishes, lobster, red crab, and many more seafood are abundant, plus some marine products transported from Australia, U.S.A., etc. It's just too many choices to choose one's favourite.

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Travel Tips

Huizhou Coast Hotspring Resort

Add: Zhegudong, Pinghai Town, Huidong County, Huizhou, Guangdong Province.

Transport: Take a passenger bus from the Shenzhen Luohu Bus Terminus to Huizhou for about 2 hours.

Admission: 130 yuan (free of charge if staying at the resort)

Room rate: Standard double-bed room 528 yuan; Coastal Villa 728 yuan/ room

Tel: (752) 857 8888

Website: www.hbwq.com.cn

Pinghai Old Town

Add: Pinghai Town, Huidong County, Huizhou, Guangdong Province.

Transport: Take a registered moto-bike from Pinghai Town to there, which costs about 3 yuan.

Free admission.

Ancient Guangzhou Guildhall is Saved

Photos & Article · Valery Garrett

Guangzhou today is a fast-paced modern city, but here and there vestiges of its long history endure. There were once many guildhalls in Guangzhou but the Jinlun Guildhall is the only one to survive and has been recently restored and opened to the public.

Auspicious creatures adorn the roof ridge above the front entrance of the Jinlun Guildhall.

無蘭室自馨
有竹人不俗

Shiwan pottery panels depicting folktales and good luck symbols.

Built in the first year of the Yongzheng emperor's reign in the Qing dynasty (1723), the guildhall was a meeting place for all involved in the production of silk until the early 20th century.

Silk was a major industry in Guangzhou. In the countryside around the city mulberry trees planted in the rich soil of the Pearl River Delta fed the silkworms, generating as many as seven cycles of silk production a year. The raw silk was brought to the city to be woven, and by the early 19th century it was estimated there were nearly 20,000 men, women and children weaving every weight from gossamer fine gauzes to stiff satins. Silk was in great demand not only by the wealthy Chinese who wore voluminous robes richly embroidered with dragons or auspicious emblems, but also by foreign traders who took it back to the west where it was eagerly purchased by the aristocracy for clothing and home furnishings.

The many different guildhalls in Guangzhou covered all type of commercial activities. These guilds, like trade-unions, controlled the number of people engaged in the craft, regulated the hours they worked, and maintained quality standards, wages, and prices. They had showrooms and meeting halls, offered food and entertainment, and provided accommodation for visitors from other regions.

Guildhalls were some of most beautiful buildings in the city, and the Jinlun was no exception. Comprising three spacious halls of grey brick, one behind the other, with narrow halls at the sides, it is a typical ancestral hall structure with a floor area of 700 sq metres. Graceful granite columns support the tiled roof, and intricately carved wooden panels and panes of coloured glass form the doors and screens. Shiwan pottery figures depicting mythical folk tales adorn the ridge of the roof. The building is an elegant representation of the Lingnan style of architecture and was built from members' donations, their names recorded on the carved stone wall plaques. Glass cases display recently made silk embroidery pictures and large pieces of carved wooden furniture show styles of the period.

The Guangzhou City Government was keen to preserve such a valuable piece of history, since it is an important reminder of the old Maritime Silk Road which began at Guangzhou and stretched across the Indian Ocean to the Middle East. In July 1999 the guildhall was officially designated a cultural relic, and plans were set in place to preserve it. Two years later, when Kangwang Road was being constructed, the guildhall lay directly in its path. Special funds were allocated for its protection and renovation, which entailed jacking up the building and moving it north and west, out of the way of the road. This monumental achievement was the first of its kind, not just in China, but anywhere in the world for an old structure of this type, and significant of the importance of the Jinlun Guildhall.

Travel Tips

Location: Situated on Kangwang Road next to the Jade Market and near the Hualin Temple.

Opening hours: 09:30 ~ 17:30 daily

Admission: 3 yuan

Zhongshan — City of a First Chinese Son

Photos & Article · Tony Henderson

Upon reaching Zhongshan city, my friend and I but had no place to stay as of then as the plan was to walk along a local shopping street and discover the perfect place to stay. It is too easy just to enter some five-star hotels and it's like being anywhere else in the world — well, until you step outside of the lobby — but we really wanted a local experience.

Sunwen Road has some decorous buildings. A clock tower with illuminated sheer sides, pastel hues all about. A strange mix hiding or complicating its architectural origins. Burlesque with baroque. Pretty enough though and pleasing on the eye. The style of the shops, with tall passageways to the front, were also comfortable to behold. But where were the place that our pal had promised to stay?

Getting in the Hotel

We found it finally! It was the Zhongshan Guest House and it really was so charming there in the middle of town. The room was large and comfortable that we were instantly gratified so hastily made for the door to seek out that last restaurant we had sighted. Bottles of Haizhu beer came first till we got acquainted with the offerings. Black chicken soup in a ceramic pot, a helping of fried rice with salty fish, a platter of beef and mushroom, enough, enough! We were well pleased and of course laughed over our day's journey.

On hitting the sunny airs next day it was realised what a truly delightful hotel this was. A Chinese restaurant serving dim sum lay to the side. The reception-lobby with its tall ceilings and fans were sided with equally tall and spacious rooms that served large groups of morning tea regulars. The huge windows were flung wide open and the morning's sunny airs flowed in, dancing the lace curtains. People were in fine mood and no wonder.

Visiting Cuiheng Village

The following day we made a beeline for Cuiheng Village — the birthplace of Sun Yat Sen (1866—1925). Not only to pay respects to a real hero but to get acquainted with the man who initiated great changes and contacted a multitude of overseas nationals to bring China into the international fold, on fair footing. The Museum of Sun Yat Sen features his former residence while an exhibition tells of the social conditions extant in his time, the folk customs and culture thereabouts.

Adjacent to the museum is a replica based on restoration of typical village quarters in the years of Sun Yat Sen's childhood and youth in late Qing period. Ancestor halls with their tablets and bed chambers, all going to show a quality life for the ranking individuals.

We had a day at Sun Yat Sen Memorial Park, a popular spot on the inter-section of Xingzhong Road (with its roadside mango trees) and Chenggui Road. This we found to be the most convenient park to visit as it's close to central Zhongshan. My advice here: take your own provisions and unless you are the odd one out that enjoys USA Pabst beer, take your own local beer!

Just off Sunwen Road is West Mountain Temple, situated up a series of stone steps. We witnessed a melodic 'Sunday service' of chanting there that is peculiar to Chinese Buddhism. It charms the mind, and, with the increasing pace of the rhythms, the way of devotional Buddhism can be discerned as it rises to its daily conclusion. A bevy of monks, a flock of the faithful and a crowd of onlookers were there — with the usual security guard but this one chanting along with everyone!

Where to Dine in Zhongshan:

1. Food Street
2. Shi Qi Lao Restaurant

Add: Located opposite to Fuhua Hotel by Qihe River Must-try: Pigeon served in plum wine

3. Revolving Restaurant

Add: Located atop Fuhua Hotel Must-try: Fried rice with chicken and salted fish

24 May **Hong Kong**

Birthday of Lord Buddha

In May and June the town offers tourists many spot of traditional Chinese festivals, including: the Tin Hau Festival on 9 May, the Cheung Chau Bun Festival on 24 May, the Tam Kung Festival on 24 May, and the Dragon Boat Festival on 19 June. On 24 May which is the eighth day of the fourth lunar month, the Po Lin Monastery on Lantau Island holds a 10-day ceremony to commemorate the birth of the Lord Buddha. Don't miss out amazing staged shows and *kungfu* performance by young Shaolin monks.

30 May ~ 3 Jun **Tibet**

Gyantze Horse Race

Gyantze Horse Race Festival is the earliest one starting since 1408. Horse has long been a very important tool for daily life of Tibetans especially during ancient wartime. Tibetan people have deep affection to horses. During the festival, horse race, archery contest and other games are performed.

2007 MAY/JUN

23 May ~ 10 Jun **Chengdu**

1st Int'l Festival on Intangible Cultural Heritage

Held in Chengdu, capital of West China's Sichuan Province, the festival will arrange a special meeting of the inter-governmental committee of the United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and representatives from 24 inter-governmental committees and 50 observers and non-governmental representative. A park specially designed for ICH protection will be opened to the public during the festival.

1 May ~ 30 Jun **Hong Kong**

Le French May

Another extraordinary event lasting for two months that can't be overlooked, 'Le French May' celebrates its 15th anniversary with fabulous programmes from for free to charge, covering operas, movies, literature, to multi-arts. It has become a brand attributed to all top quality artistic events naturally associated with France and its culture. Click for more to the nice website: www.frenchmay.com/

9 Mar ~ 10 Jun **Beijing**

British History Exhibition

The exhibition will be held at the Forbidden City, titled 'Britain Meets the World 1714–1830'. It explores Britain's engagement with the world during the Georgian period when the nation was emerging as an international power. It also showcases 111 artifacts from the British Museum, including paintings by Da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Raphael, many of which have never been exhibited outside of the British islands.

4 Apr ~ 6 May **Hong Kong**

Chinese Toys Exhibition

The exhibition is opened by Singaporean Marvin Chan. He has also opened the Museum of Shanghai Toys (MoST) in Shanghai which is the first of its kind in the world. The event displays 600 Chinese toys made from late Qing dynasty to modern times. From these toys the public can learn about the history and culture of contemporary China.

Venue: New Century Plaza, Mongkok
Website: www.most.com.sg

Marvin Chan and his toys

29 ~ 31 May **Hong Kong**

Conference on Climate Change

The international conference is expected to bring together experts and government officials from 26 countries and regions. The meeting will also assess the potential impacts of climate change, propose mitigation and adaptation measures, and to develop strategies to implement these measures.

Rejuvenated at Zhuhai's Ocean Spring Resort

Photos & Article · yuki_ROUGE

The Ocean Hot Spring located in the Ocean Spring Resort in Zhuhai city, Guangdong Province, is one of the largest investment items of the China Travel Service Co., Ltd in these years. Early in this year, the Ocean Spring has opened another new hot spring park — Garden Hot Spring, that has become another attraction at the site.

Back to the Nature

The Garden Hot Spring is actually a place of interest. First of all, its exquisite and overall arrangement is planned in a picturesque environment; while keeping a closer look, elegant wooden buildings are surrounded by flowing creeks and small arch bridges. One can also view and admire the artificial stone gardening and let the mood be relaxed. There are a total of 23 hot springs, in which the hot spring waters are added with milk, coffee, red wine, Chinese herbs, and fragrant oil, etc. The author is wondering: Would I be immersed in a mixed aroma after bathing all of them?

To the Ocean

In fact the author most appreciates the boundless view of the Huangmao Sea to the southwest of Zhuhai. In such a recreational and touristy city as Zhuhai, it is easy to look for a hot spring resort that offers garden view. However, to own both garden and sea views, Ocean Spring Resort will be the only one.

Though located in a small area beside the Ocean Hot Spring, the Garden Hot Spring has the closest distance with the ocean. Once entering the area, you will agree with the resort's promotional tagline: Being in hot spring but feel like in the sea. The Ocean Hot Spring and the Garden Hot Spring have just matched perfectly. The former one promotes itself as 'a tour to the world'; while the latter one provides people a secluded place to rejuvenate after being exposed to 'the world'.

Among classical garden building, in environment of flowers and birdsongs, let your tiredness release; allow the spring water trickle gently, or with the soft music filled in the fresh seashore air polishing your soul; shine or air your appealing mood under the bright sunlight or graceful moonlight; let the world and sea listen to your words in heart.

Because the Garden Hot Spring is but your secret garden.

Ocean Hot Spring - Garden Hot Spring
Opening hours: 09:00 ~ 01:30
Admission: 168 yuan Tel: (756) 772 8999
Website: www.oceanspringresort.com

READERSHIP SURVEY

China
TOURISM
GETAWAY PROVINCE OF JIANGXI
Mt Lushan & Wuyuan Town
309
Cultural Heritage of Guangdong
— Watchtowers in KAIPING

Our readers' ideas and opinions are important to us. Please take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. Your responses will help us improve *China Tourism* magazine. Thank you!

1. What did you enjoy about this issue (E309) and why?

____

____

2. Was there anything about this issue that you thought could be improved?

____

____

3. Where did you first encounter *China Tourism*?

☐ Subscription ☐ Newsstand ☐ From friends ☐ Bookstore (Name of bookstore: __________)
☐ Hotel (Name of hotel: __________) ☐ Airline VIP lounge (Name of airline: __________)

4. Why do you read *China Tourism*?

☐ Planning trips ☐ Business ☐ General Interest ☐ Others: __________

5. How long have you been reading *China Tourism*?

☐ Since the beginning ☐ Less than 3 years ☐ 3 ~ 5 years ☐ 6 ~ 9 years ☐ More than 10 years

6. Which *China Tourism* articles are you most interested in reading?

☐ Book Review
☐ Discovery
☐ Hotel Picks
☐ Profile
☐ Challenges
☐ Editorial
☐ Landscapes
☐ Traveller's Corner
☐ City Snaps
☐ Excursions
☐ Nature
☐ Others: __________
☐ Culture
☐ Feature Story
☐ New Attractions
☐ Customs
☐ HK Mosaic
☐ On the Way

7. What information or topics you would like *China Tourism* to cover in the future?

____

8. What are your suggestions for improving the magazine?

____

9. How many times have you visited China?

☐ Less than 3 times ☐ 3 ~ 5 times ☐ More than 5 times

10. What is your favourite destination in China? __________

11. What other travel- or China-related publications do you read?

☐ Traveller (National Geographic)
☐ Hong Kong Discovery
☐ China Today
☐ HK Magazine
☐ China Pictorial
☐ Culture Hong Kong
☐ Action Asia
☐ Others: __________

Please provide us with the following information:

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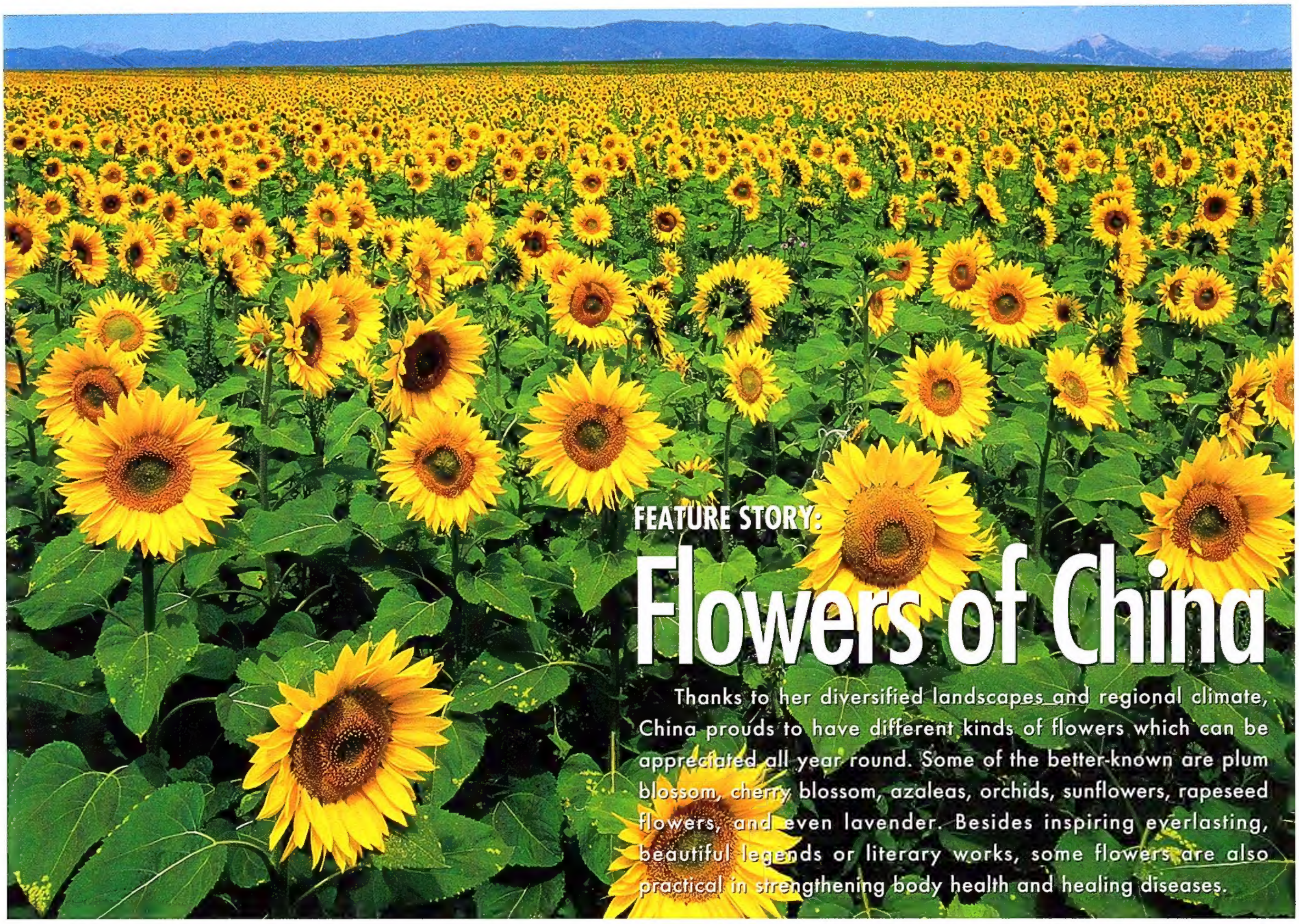


FEATURE STORY:

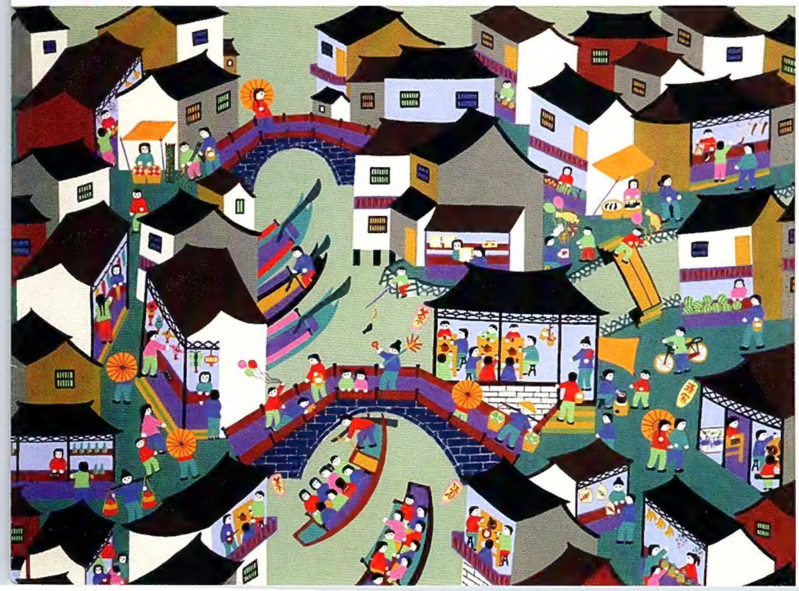
Flowers of China

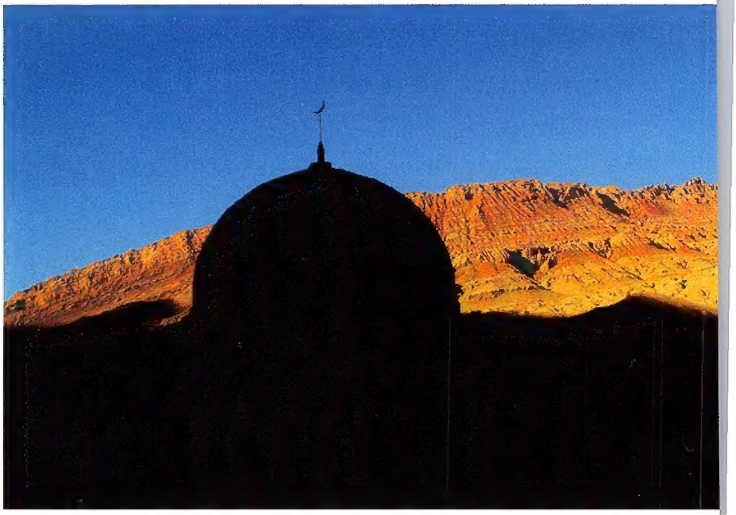
Thanks to her diversified landscapes and regional climate, China prouds to have different kinds of flowers which can be appreciated all year round. Some of the better-known are plum blossom, cherry blossom, azaleas, orchids, sunflowers, rapeseed flowers, and even lavender. Besides inspiring everlasting, beautiful legends or literary works, some flowers are also practical in strengthening body health and healing diseases.

Culture

Farmer's Drawings

Not as famous as Vincent Van Gogh, however, many farmer painters do have a sharp artistic eye and drawing skills. The reporter collects drawings of farmers from around China: Huxian in Shaanxi, Jinshan in Shanghai, Tonggu in Guizhou, Shengsi in Zhejiang, Zhangzhou in Fujian, and Longmen in Guangdong. Nobody will not be mermerized by these outstanding masterpieces.





Discoveries

Across Tuyu Valley in Xinjiang

Located at the foot of the Flaming Mountain of Turpan in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, the Tuyu Valley is an amazing place to tourists. Here, Buddhism and Islam religions co-exist peacefully, and more mysterious stories and cultures are to be discovered by the adventurous reader...

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